

The Socialist Trinity of the Party, the Unions and the Press

THE SEWER SOCIALISTS

by Elmer A. Beck



THE SEWER SOCIALISTS

A HISTORY OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF WISCONSIN 1897 - 1940

BY ELMER AXEL BECK

VOLUME ONE

THE SOCIALIST TRINITY OF THE PARTY, THE UNIONS, AND THE PRESS

VOLUME TWO

THE NINETEEN-TWENTIES AND THE NINETEEN-THIRTIES

Introduction by The Honorable Frank P. Zeidler, L.L.D. (honoris causa) Former Mayor of Milwaukee and
Socialist Party candidate for the office of President of the United States.

John E. and Mildred W. Westburg, General Editors



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INTRODUCTION

By

FRANK P. ZEIDLER

The application of political theory to the practical problems of government always presents problems for both party theoreticians and party practitioners. The socialist movement in Wisconsin did not escape the anguish of trying to participate in government and yet to reconcile political necessity with democratic socialist theory. This is a motif that runs through the history of the Socialist Party of Wisconsin, in Elmer Beck's *The Sewer Socialists*.

The title is not to be considered a derogation by the author. Rather it reflects a time when the practical Socialists of Wisconsin were held in some derogation by Socialist theoreticians, especially in the eastern states, who said the Milwaukee Socialists were incapable of great theoretical thinking and were content to see that rubbish was collected and sewers installed. The Milwaukee Socialists readily accepted the label as an answer to their detractors whom they considered impossibilists who could not win any elections.

Beck's work is a readable and accurate account of a democratic socialist party that was principally based in Milwaukee. The intrinsic value of the history is that the Party, despite its small numbers of members, had a notable effect in Wisconsin and the United States in political philosophy and major party platforms. The platforms and principles of the Socialist Party of Wisconsin--propagandized, orated, lobbied, and legislated--profoundly influenced the enactment of the progressive laws for which Wisconsin became noted and which were later copied in national legislation.

The Wisconsin Socialists were led first by an Austrian immigrant, Victor L. Berger, whose scholarship and pen served as the inspiration of the movement until he died in 1929. Thereafter, the movement carried on with a momentum imparted to it by the Berger Era. Beck describes the eventful years of the 1930's and brings his history to a close in 1940 with the defeat of the colorful Daniel W. Hoan. Hoan's career as a Socialist city attorney and mayor was one of the few bright spots in an otherwise dismal history of American municipal government.

The socialist movement was inspired by the hope of a brotherhood of workers, the *Cooperative Commonwealth*; by a fierce opposition to war; by a belief in the rights of people; by a passion for orderly government; and by a contempt for graft and boodling. Beck details how the Socialists expressed these fundamental attitudes through practical politics.

Beck has endeavored to be as factually correct as possible, to be as errorless as a conscientious historian seeks to be. He encountered some accounts of the Socialists' deeds which were not correct and in some instances he has made emendations. He started his research in Milwaukee early in 1965 at the Socialist Party office in Brisbane Hall which was razed shortly after in clearance for construction of a freeway. Beck worked there from primary sources which had not been used, some not available, for earlier writing. These included minutes of the Milwaukee county central committee and of the state party, letter files, Party publications, and other items.

Many of these sources, alas, exist no more. They were in the office of the Socialist Party which was burned out in the fire that demolished the Metropolitan Block on December 20, 1975. Irreplaceable records were totally destroyed, a tragic loss to an important part of Wisconsin history.

Beck's research in the 1960's was for his master's thesis in journalism on *The Milwaukee Leader*. He started work on the original manuscript for the history of the Party in July 1973 which was funded by the estate of Milton Jacob Bodamer, a long-time member of the Socialist Party. A resident of Greenfield, Wisconsin, Bodamer died on January 11, 1968. He was one of the rank-and-file members of the Party who made possible the Milwaukee experience of clean, honest, and progressive government that came to influence the enactment of social legislation in Wisconsin.

Milwaukee, 1981

PREFACE

The Victor Berger Movement would be a fitting characterization of the Socialism of this study in its first three decades. And characteristic of the Socialists ever since the word originated and people identified themselves by it a century ago, the Socialist Party founded by Berger and Eugene V. Debs started in diversity, in the split which they led from the Social Democracy of America to form the Social Democratic Party.

There were differences and changes in the Berger movement as there were in the Socialism of the following two decades of this study, but the cohesion of the Milwaukee and Wisconsin Socialists through all the years was extraordinary. Most important of the reasons they stuck together was their success in winning elections and achieving objectives; they stuck together to win but for different reasons, even so in the crescendo years. On March 26, 1910 The Social Democratic Herald described "Two Socialist Attitudes":

Within the party there are two distinct types of mind, the doctrinaire and the practical.

The doctrinaire sets up a formula and is dominated by it. The practical comrade is not held down by creeds.

The doctrinaire measures all things with his dogma. The practical comrade analyzes each question on its own merits.

The doctrinaire is intent upon being theoretically correct. The practical comrade cares only about being efficient.

The doctrinaire is tyrannized by catchwords. The practical comrade does not allow phrases to stand between him and results.

The doctrinaire insists upon people accepting his definitions. The practical comrade talks in the language of the street.

The doctrinaire would sooner belong to a sect that is sound than to a movement that is doing things....

The doctrinaire asks: "Are cooperatives Socialistic?" The practical comrade asks: "Are cooperatives a benefit to the working class?"

The doctrinaire wants a program declaring for the socialization of all capital. The practical comrade demands merely the socialization of those industries in which collective ownership is both desirable and feasible.

The exposition, which was under the byline W. R. Shier, concluded that each Comrade is a fine fellow. "They both have a place in the Socialist movement."

Looking backward from the perspective of the present generation, some might think that the objectives and accomplishments of the "Sewer Socialists" appear to be inconsequential, a view perhaps in the context of the term "immediate demands". It is a special term of reference, a couple of words, quite distant today from the earthly realities that were the referents in the 1900's: sewers rotten, defective, clogged; polluted drinking water; streets strewn with horse droppings and littered with uncollected garbage; and ashes piled on the sidewalks.

When the Socialists were elected in Milwaukee in 1910 they began immediately to carry out their platform demands. They reorganized the Department of Public Works, organized a Bureau of Sewerage, and accomplished the reforms narrated in the early chapters of this book.

However, the specifics of what they did during the administration of Mayor Emil Seidel were merely the beginning.

The term "SEWER SOCIALISTS" was symbolic, not denotative; laudatory, not derogatory.

The Milwaukee Socialists were ideologists from the beginning of the Party, through the beginning years and into the 1930's--none the less so because they won elections and were do-ers. They were activists in a movement that was at once an economic analysis, a philosophy, a faith, a way of life that permeated American existence and left lasting impacts in politics, government, legislation, the trade union movement, and public morality.

Change is the essence of existence. The Socialist movement was an existence; it was not and could not have been immune to changes. Some of the changes were the interactive effects of the Socialists' accomplishments and efforts. The narration of these changes is the history of the Socialists, the embodiment of "the Personal Union", to a Farmer-Labor Alliance operating in the La Follettes' reformist Progressive Party and at the same time supporting Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. In the last stage there would be no Socialist electoral organization, no political ideology. And organized labor would become more and more allied with the Democratic Party.

The Socialists in Milwaukee could not lick unemployment or the Great Depression. They might have known how to do it, but they did not have the power. The federal government of the United States did and under the Democratic president, the federal government used its power to attack the Great Depression. What this led to was the magnification of the role that the federal government was henceforth to play in the economy and the conduct of public affairs, and this became correlative with the lessened power and prestige for local and state governments. It was a development which had direct and deadly effects on the political parties of local and state structure--particularly on the Socialist Party of Milwaukee and the Progressive Party of Wisconsin.

Everybody in the Great Depression knew from whom all blessings did

flow--knew who was responsible for making jobs--knew that it was Washington, D.C.--Franklin D. Roosevelt--the Democrats! In the municipal election of 1936 in Milwaukee the Socialist county central committee was apprised of "derogatory remarks" being spread on Public Works Administration jobs against the Socialist candidates "to the effect that if the Socialists are elected, men are liable to lose their jobs and that they had better get busy and work for the nonpartisan candidates." That was recorded in the "Minutes" of an executive board meeting on March 9, 1936.

Another concentric effect of the burgeoning of federal governmental activities was a beckoning to job seekers of whom there were "quite a few" in the unions and in the Socialist and Progressive Parties. The patronage of the city and state parties was meager. The patronage of the ruling national party and its multiplying "alphabetical" administrations was bonanza.

The evolution of the Milwaukee and Wisconsin labor movements, from the beginning as this study tells it was a process of adaptation to the economic and social environment, to events and conditions. And the adaptation, in turn, was facilitated by the politically changing environment--for example, the political environment in which the Democratic Party changed from a Tweedledee conservative alternative of the Republican Party to a liberal vehicle for carrying a former Socialist and union leader, Andrew J. Biemiller, to Victor Berger's old seat in the United States Congress. That came to pass in the presidential election years of 1944 and 1948. In the spring of 1948 Socialist Frank P. Zeidler was elected mayor of Milwaukee and re-elected in 1952 and again in 1956. Socialists united in supporting him, but many held that this was not a Party accomplishment. Frank was a brother of Carl Zeidler who was elected mayor in 1940 and was killed during his service in the United States Navy in World War II.

The black clouds of the coming war in the years 1940 and 1941 and the lightning and thunder of the bombing of Pearl Harbor were the continuum of events and conditions with which this history trails off.

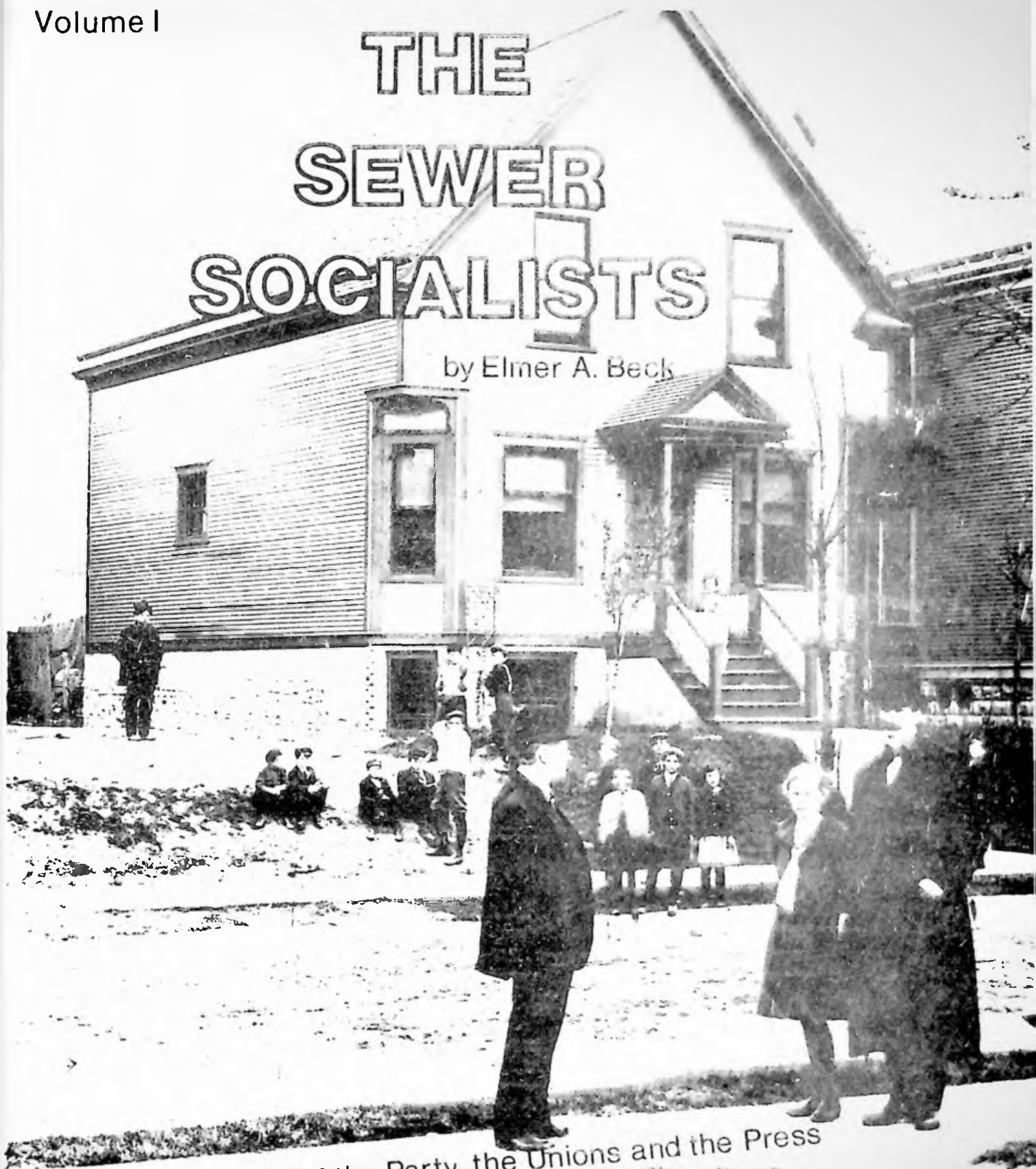
E.A.B.

Kenosha, Wisconsin, August 1981.

Volume I

THE SEWER SOCIALISTS

by Elmer A. Beck



The Socialist Trinity of the Party, the Unions and the Press

VOLUME ONE
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

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Mayor Emil Seidel standing at left in front of his home, circa 1910. He was the first Socialist Mayor of Milwaukee. Photograph WHi(X3)33150 reproduced by permission of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Chapter Ends

Mosaic entrance to Brisbane Hall, Juneau Avenue side, Milwaukee, 1965. Photograph from the collection of Frank P. Zeidler.

The International Socialist Bureau, circa 1895. Photograph WHi(X3)37520 reproduced by permission of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

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Delegates to the First National Convention of the Socialist Party of the United States, May 1-6, 1901, Chicago, Illinois. Photograph WHi(X3)24746 reproduced by permission of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

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Frederic Heath, Victor L. Berger, Eugene V. Debs, and Seymour Stedman, members of the national executive committee of the Socialist Party of the United States, circa 1918. Photograph from the collection of Frank P. Zeidler.

Facing Page 24.

Frederic Heath and Victor Berger in Berger's chambers in Milwaukee. Reproduced by permission of *The Milwaukee Journal*.

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Emil Seidel, the first Socialist Mayor of Milwaukee, elected to office in 1910. Under his administration major reforms occurred in public health, legislative research, sanitation, fiscal accountability, public safety, and streets and sewers. He cleaned out graft, corruption, and prostitution, and instituted unprecedented economies in every city department. A leader of the "Sewer Socialists" who were as interested in practical administration of government as in the socialistic ideology, Seidel was a self-educated and widely-read intellectual although a skilled worker by trade. Photograph reproduced by permission of *The Milwaukee Journal*.

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Victor L. Berger, first representative in the U.S. Congress from the Social Democratic (Socialist) Party. He was editor of the socialist and labor dailies in Milwaukee until his death. Photograph WHi(X3)1836 reproduced by permission of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

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Newspaper delivery truck for *The Milwaukee Leader* parked in front of the newspaper offices. Undated photograph circa 1925. Reproduced by permission of *The Milwaukee Journal*.

Facing Page 130.

The city desk and news room of *The Milwaukee Leader*, the daily newspaper of the Socialist Party in Wisconsin. Both the newspaper and the party headquarters were located in Brisbane Hall which later was razed. Undated photograph circa 1928, reproduced by permission of *The Milwaukee Journal*.

Facing Page 131.

Poster, "Socialism and The War", announcing speech by Emil Seidel, former Mayor of Milwaukee, to be given at Theresa, Wisconsin, Thursday evening, December 20, 1917. Photograph WHi (X3) 37521 reproduced by permission of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

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Posters of local political office candidates endorsed by the Socialist Party in Milwaukee. Undated photograph from the collection of Frank P. Zeidler.

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Daniel W. Hoan, Mayor of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1916-1940. Because of the efficient and honest government in the city under his administration, he is considered as being the second of the "four good mayors" of Milwaukee, the first being Emil Seidel, and the last being Frank P. Zeidler. Undated photograph circa 1930. Reproduced by permission of *The Milwaukee Journal*.

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Eugene Debs addressing an audience. Persons seated, left to right, are John M. Work, William Coleman, Meta Berger, Heinrich Bartel, and Victor Berger. Standing is Walter Polakowski. Undated photograph from the collection of Frank P. Zeidler.

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Former Mayor of Milwaukee, Emil Seidel, speaking to an audience. The former mayor was opposed to United States' entry into World War I. Undated photograph circa 1917, reproduced by permission of *The Milwaukee Journal*.

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CHAPTER I

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Socialism in Wisconsin was interwoven from many strands that ran back in the past, as it was in other locales, but the organization that comprehensively represented the -ism can be said to have had a precise and overt beginning. This is a narrative of that organization, of the people that formed and built it--the Socialist Party of Wisconsin.

Past events relating to the Wisconsin Socialists will be discussed, including those that they caused or influenced and happenings which were not of their doing but which affected them and changed their milieus.

The beginning was the formation on June 18, 1897 in Chicago of the Social Democracy of America, from which organization the party was directly descended. Three weeks later, on July 9, Branch One of the Social Democracy of America was formed in Milwaukee.

Citing a date of the genesis of the Socialist Party is the stating of one fact; another fact is that the party was created by persons who were and had been socialists before the organization was started.

The leader among socialists in Milwaukee and Wisconsin and one of the most influential in America was Victor Louis Berger.

Berger was born February 28, 1860 in Austria-Hungary in the village of Nieder-Rehback. The family moved to Leutschau, Hungary in 1867 where his parents ran the village inn. Berger attended the gymnasias and universities of Budapest and Vienna, but before his graduation financial reverses caused his family to emigrate to the United States in 1878.

He came to Milwaukee in 1881 not yet conversant with the English language, but his strong rolling Teutonic accent was no handicap because Milwaukee was a German town. How German it was in those days is indicated by the fact that there were five German daily newspapers and only two in English. "The grocery and apothecary shops of the town, especially on the North and West sides, had signs stuck in their windows: 'English Spoken Here'."¹

Berger came to Milwaukee as a tutor to the son of A. W. Rich, a shoe manufacturer, and was later engaged as a teacher of German in the public schools. He began then a mastery of the English language, but he never overcame what he called his "Milwaukee accent".

He started writing for the newspapers and became drama critic for the leading German daily, *The Germania Herald*.

Berger was at this time a follower of Henry George but abandoned his belief in the single tax after winning a debate in which he had upheld the idea. His opponent was a Marxist shoemaker. Berger said he felt while he was arguing that he was the loser and that then and there he decided to study Karl Marx. From this in the early 1880's, Berger became a socialist.

A large number of German immigrants who had settled in Milwaukee were believers in the doctrines of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Ferdinand Lassalle. Their agitations were carried on in German; hence their influence among the native Americans--the Yankees--was small. Novices in the American labor movement, they had small faith in the effectiveness of trade unions. They looked to the German socialists in the fatherland and like them expected to enter the political arena, to acquire influence, and through control of the state to set up the cooperative commonwealth.

The labor historian, Selig Perlman, referred to this socialism in Milwaukee as "the German or pre-American stage". This was the first of four stages in the development of socialism in Milwaukee, according to Perlman. The other stages, in order, were the "Socio-Populist", the "Independent Class-Conscious", and the "General Reform".

Becoming a socialist, Berger resigned his teaching position in December 1892 and was soon expressing his views through journalism. He became a leader in activities that centered about the *Arbeiter Zeitung* (Workers' Newspaper), a German socialist triweekly, of which he became editor in 1893. He then changed its name to the *Milwaukee Daily Vorwaerts* (Forward).² He was to be a socialist editor and propagandist for the rest of his life.

When Berger took charge of the *Vorwaerts*, he stood at a fork in the road, so to say. To the left was the German old country way on which he might rush with a small group of intransigent friends toward the socialist state, eschewing the cooperation of the trade unions. To the right lay the new American way on which he would with the unions, with greater numbers and power, push on more slowly but more surely to the socialist brotherhood of man.

The latter way appeared to him more practical, so he chose it.

Berger threw himself into trade union and political activity. He joined the Knights of Labor. He worked in the eight-hour movement. He joined the Socialist-Labor Party--which he soon quit and from which he was expelled. He joined the People's Party.

All Berger's energies were typical of the moves of many thousands of Americans swirled by the seething social forces of the times.

These were formative years of the Socialist Party of America.

Berger got together a "*Vereinigung*", a group of German-speaking socialist friends numbering between 35 and 40, called "*Sozialistischer*" or "*Sozial-Demokratischer*". All were readers of the *Vorwaerts*.

The members of the *Vereinigung* later became leaders of the Socialist Party of Wisconsin. One of them, Emil Seidel who was to be elected mayor of Milwaukee, wrote, "It was not a political party; rather a group of class-conscious socialists...we met in the printery of Comrade Jacob Hunger located in the basement of Union Hall on the northwest corner of Sixth and Chestnut streets..."

"George Moerschel was the secretary, Jacob Hunger, the treasurer. The chairman was chosen at each meeting. That custom was continued in all branches of the party."³

The meetings were for some time conducted in German.

Many of the members had belonged to the Socialist Labor Party and quit because "there was too much quarreling" and because of the autocratic methods of the national leader, Daniel De Leon, Seidel said.

The *Vorwaerts* socialists led by the *Vereinigung* entered the municipal election campaign in 1894 by joining the Cooperative Labor organization which was comprised of the populist and trade union elements in Milwaukee. Berger was a member of the three-man executive committee of the fusion. The workers' coalition got 3,583 votes for its mayoral candidate, John Ulrich, an elementary school principal. The Republican and Democratic candidates received 24,053 and 18,815 votes respectively.

A special recognition of Berger's leadership was given late in 1895 by the daily newspaper, *Milwaukee Sentinel*. The city of Milwaukee was incorporated in 1846. With 50 years of the city behind it, *The Sentinel* asked Berger to look 50 years ahead. He did. He then wrote an article purporting to be published during Milwaukee's centennial celebration, he wrote 3,700 words that appeared October 16, 1895 under the boxed title:

SOCIALISM IN 1945, A.D.
By Victor L. Berger, Editor of
The Daily Vorwaerts

Berger wrote, in part:

Milwaukee is the metropolis of the West, in 1945, and a socialist town, as are indeed all other cities, towns and villages in the United States.

Alas! Chicago and New York are rather second class cities, not having had sufficient time to recover from the terrible blow which they received during the great "social revolution." Yes, true morality and humanity have been avenged in a terrible manner.

The two great centers of sin, lust, avarice and crime, Chicago and New York, went down before a hungry, brutalized and insane mob--the product of misery, ignorance and the capitalist system, when everybody looked out for himself alone.

But now, in 1945, all of these have vanished: capitalism, misery, anarchy, mob-rule and pandemonium--all these have succumbed to the genius of humanity and its new order: Socialism.

Milwaukee has stood the great revolution remarkably well. The workingmen and proletarians of the city were mostly socialists long before the change came. They understood the cause of the revolution and its aim right from the start.

They knew that humanity, past, present and future, is a living organism, of which not a single constituent could be dropped without bringing the Cosmos into confusion. And they therefore also knew that capitalism, too, was a necessary link in the chain of human progress.

In Milwaukee not a single factory, not a single house, had been destroyed during the great revolution, in fact there was no disturbance worth speaking of; all the necessary changes were effected in a quiet, orderly manner.

Milwaukee now at its anniversary in 1945 is therefore, compared with others, a very quaint looking town, in places.

But all this occasional quaintness notwithstanding, which in fact lends an additional charm to the town, Milwaukee is a grand city.

As we have socialism now, it goes without saying that we have no poverty. Only a sick man is considered a poor man. And while our sick people are well cared for by the community, still they are considered a fit object for "charity" by our good ladies. And that is the only kind of charity we have and can make use of.

But we have less sickness now than ever before, there being no poor filthy quarters in our city to breed disease, everybody having the best food and clothing obtainable and all the houses and streets being supplied with the best sanitary precautions.

Our people also know better how to take care of themselves, because they are better educated, and they even learn more in that respect every day, as science progresses.

We also strengthen the race constantly by bodily exercise, general cleanliness and proper marriage. We do not permit everybody to get married and leave disease, weakness and crime as his legacy to the next generation. For there are still occasional occurrences of crime and immorality, but we treat such cases as sickness, in proper hospitals, and we certainly do not allow such poor afflicted people to get married and propagate their kind, provided such cases of moral, mental and physical affliction are severe.

A proper record of everybody's health (or sickness, rather) is kept by the physicians in the health office at the city hall, and people before mating have the privilege of looking up each other's health record.

We all work--all men and women above legal school age, which is 21. Men work until they are 48, women until 45, for four hours a day and five days in the week, with a legal vacation of four weeks every year.

This is more than sufficient to produce all the necessities and many of the luxuries of life in overabundance, for we use machinery wherever possible and they run night and day and stop only for repairs, although the workers change every four hours.

All over this Western region, in the states of Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, etc., the difference between the level of Lake Superior and Lake Michigan is used for the purpose of creating the necessary electric power.

The most dangerous and disagreeable work in mines, tunnels, etc. (as far as it cannot be done by machinery), is very eagerly sought after by young, ambitious and energetic men, who like to achieve distinction. They are the heroes of our labor battalions.

Everybody lives more comfortably than fifty years ago. And while there are fewer luxuries than some rich people enjoyed at that day there are, for all, more of what we called "necessaries of life" in the Twentieth century, some of which surely were not known to the world fifty years ago.

And while in 1945 you can find no saloons or gin mills and only one small brewery in Milwaukee, we have 56 fine theaters and opera houses (some of them still devoted to the German art) and a large number of picture galleries, libraries, concert halls, and museums, and

since there is plenty of leisure and animation for art and culture, the demand for these institutions is growing daily.

And while there is no "equality" of individuals, there is an equality of chances for all individuals according to the natural facilities of each. Only, instead of the individual fight of everybody against everybody, there is interdependence--everybody must help everybody. And while everybody is free, everybody feels a dread of living for himself alone. We have socialism in 1945!

How did it all come about?

It came as a matter of course. And it came to civilized America even sooner than to the civilized old countries. For nowhere has capitalism had such perfect liberty of action as in the United States. And by this liberty of capitalistic action very suddenly a change came over our industry and business. This change was the formation of "trusts"--which meant a complete abandonment of the principle of competition by which the industries of the country had hitherto been developed.

The object of the "trusts" was prevention of unhealthy competition, so as to regulate production and keep prices steady. But by means of these "trusts" all necessities of life, as bread, flour, meat, coal, sugar, leather, oil, etc., were by and by controlled by comparatively few capitalists, who composed the corporations.

And these corporations ignored the original purpose of the state entirely. For people in general the question soon arose: Shall we have organized capital or an organized government to rule us? And if the bad socialism of the trusts works so well for the capitalists, why should the good socialism of the commonwealth not work well for all of us?

Such and other questions arose in the minds of the people. And misery and greed and hunger brought on a terrible outbreak in Chicago which the United States regulars could not quell...

All of that has become a gloomy spectre only, in the year 1945.

And during the centennial celebration the mayor of the city of Milwaukee in his speech at the town hall (which is also listened to in every house, for every house is supplied with phonographs and telephones) especially

dwells upon the point that official corruption and "boodling" which were so common during the last half of the Nineteenth century have disappeared entirely.

While the focus of Berger's viewing was Milwaukee, his prophesying was characteristic of the Socialists. They were sure of what the future would be like and never hesitant in describing and explaining it. They were not alone in their conviction that the future would be better than the past and the present, in their belief in the inevitability of progress; this was an article of faith of the civilized world. But the Socialists alone knew that the inevitable ultimate result of progress would be Socialism.

Among the events that did occur in conformity with the confidence of the Socialists were: the swelling of a socialist tide in Milwaukee in 1910 that carried Emil Seidel into office as mayor and Berger as a congressman; and the uniting into a national party whose strength crested in 1912 when its candidate for president, Eugene V. Debs, received nearly 6 percent of the total vote.

In 1896 the Milwaukee Socialists formed a branch of the People's Party--the Populists--whose candidate for president in 1892, James B. Weaver, had received more than a million votes. Berger became a delegate to the party's national convention where he tried to get Debs nominated for president. But Debs demurred, and the convention nominated William Jennings Bryan, whom the Democrats had already nominated on a platform declaring "the free and unlimited coinage of both silver and gold at the present legal ratio of sixteen to one".

Their convention's action split the Populist Party which thereupon rapidly disintegrated.

"When Berger returned from that convention, his Vorwaerts denounced the bimetallic plank as utterly unfit to correct any of the workers' and farmers' grievances and he warned that if enacted into law, bimetallism would add an unsound money system to the wrongs from which the working class is suffering." So wrote Emil Seidel in his autobiography.⁴

Among the readers of the Vorwaerts was Charles P. Pfister, a Milwaukee millionaire and a power in the Republican Party. Having read Berger's editorial, he thought that his party could use it effectively in the election campaign. The Republicans and their candidate stood for "sound money", but Seidel responded:

They feared Bryan whose oratory was sweeping the masses before him. The sincere, simply written article of Berger's seemed a godsend to the worried Republicans. So Pfister asked Berger to print a second edition of 100,000 copies of the Vorwaerts containing the coveted article, for which he would pay Berger \$10,000. Pfister would distribute this edition where it would do the Republicans the most good.

It was a flattering and tempting offer, considering the poverty of the socialists. But Victor L. Berger measured up to the situation and declined the offer. He would not stoop to print his *Vorwaerts* to help Republicans. There was an over-run of a few hundred copies which the office sold at five cents a copy.

At the next meeting of the *Vereinigung* Berger reported the incident. And his comrades commended him for his loyalty to principle.

After the disappointing experiment with the Populists, Berger set about to work for the creation of a new national party. A close associate was Frederic Heath, one of Berger's most important converts to socialism. Heath recalled in an article in *The Comrade* in April 1903, "How I Became a Socialist", that Berger brought him to a meeting of the *Sozialistischer Verein* and introduced him as "the first Milwaukee Yankee Socialist".

Frederic Faries Heath was born in Milwaukee in 1864 of a lineage he could trace back to seventeenth-century New England. He had helped start the Milwaukee Ethical Society in 1895 and was a member of the Liberal Club, organizations that discussed social, economic, and intellectual questions. He also had joined the People's Party. As a socialist he quickly founded a local English-speaking "Fabian Society", after that of George Bernard Shaw and Sidney and Beatrice Webb.

Heath became a victim of technological unemployment. He was a news artist for *The Milwaukee Sentinel* making pen-and-ink drawings of events, such as fires, runaway horse accidents, court trials, and people in the news. The drawings were photographed and transferred into zinc plates to produce line engravings. From these the newspaper illustrations were printed. When the half-tone process of photoengraving was perfected in the mid-nineties, Heath's job was superseded by that of news photographer.

The employment discontinuity (a modern capitalist term) of Frederic Heath occurred in a turbulent decade.

In the summer of 1893, as the brewers of Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer recall nowadays in their advertising, the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago celebrated, one year late, the four hundredth anniversary of the European discovery of America. It took three years to construct the buildings, columns, streets, and displays of the fair. During this time the Interior Decorating Company in Milwaukee owned by Emil Seidel and his partner, Otto Lachmund, was kept busy.

But when the exposition closed, there was no more work for Seidel's company, so it folded. It went out of business with no chance of revival because a depression then engulfed the whole country and the rest of the world. The immediate cause was the panic of 1893.

In the winter of 1893-1894 a call went out to the hundreds of thousands of destitute workers in the land from Jacob Sechler Coxey to join an Army of the Unemployed of which he would be the "General" and which would start a march on Easter Sunday 1894 from Massillon, Ohio to the nation's Capitol. The army would be joined by contingents from various sections of the country, led by "generals" like Coxey, and would hold a monster demonstration on the steps of the Capitol at noon on May Day.

That was the plan, but it did not quite work out. Bands of the unemployed increased as they marched across the country but then frittered away and disappeared when the word came that General Coxey and some of his subalterns had been arrested in Washington on May Day for walking on the grass of the Capitol lawn. A few hundred ragged soldiers had reached the destination.

"Coxey's army" was remembered for years to come and entered the language as a phrase of ridicule, often defined as any unorganized gang following an agitator. But it caused an important effect in arousing among many Americans a consciousness of classes, a sense of the class struggle, and a spreading acceptance of the truth of socialist thought. Within the same reference of socialist thought, the panic of 1873, the widespread railroad strikes of 1877, the eight-hour movement and the Haymarket riot of 1886, and the Homestead lockout of 1892 were viewed as manifestations of class conflicts. So, too, were the strikes of the American Railway Union, the first of which it had won against the Great Northern Railroad and the second it had lost against the Pullman Company, both occurring in 1894.

The union, which included unskilled as well as craft workers, was founded in June 1893 by Eugene Victor Debs. In a year's time it had 150,000 members in 465 local lodges. But with the defeat of the Pullman strike, the union was shattered. Debs himself was arrested and acquitted on a charge of conspiracy to kill, was convicted of contempt of court for violating an injunction, and was sentenced to jail for six months in May 1895.

Victor Berger saw in the organization of the American Railway Union and the impetus behind it the makings of a real American workers' political party. He saw in the magnetic Debs the messiah around whom the American working class would rally.

Debs was born at Terre Haute, Indiana on November 5, 1855. On finishing grade school at the age of fourteen, he began work in the shops of the Terre Haute and Indianapolis Railway Company. In 1871 he became a locomotive fireman. In 1879 he was elected to the first of two terms as city clerk of Terre Haute and later to the Indiana legislature. In 1880 he was elected secretary and treasurer of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and appointed editor of *The Locomotive Firemen's Magazine*.

He was a gifted writer. McAlister Coleman said that *Firemen's Magazine* was "far and away" the best union periodical of that time.⁵

Throughout his career he wrote articles, mainly for labor and radical publications but also on occasions for magazines of general circulation.

But speaking was his *forté*. Debs was one of the outstanding orators in a day when oratory was an art. The poet Eugene Field wrote, "If Debs were a priest the world would listen to his eloquence, and the gentle musical voice and sad, sweet smile of his would soften the saddest heart." According to McAlister Coleman:

No contemporary orator could shift as swiftly from the roccoco sentiment which was expected of the public speakers of the '90's, to the bitterest *ad hominem* attack as could Debs. One moment he was all sweetness and light. The next he was crouched over, his voice harsh, his eyes flaming, the barbed and scornful adjectives tumbling from his lips.⁶

The story of Debs' conversion to socialism is somewhat a classic in socialist lore. When Debs was in jail at Woodstock, Illinois in 1895, Berger visited him there. Pacing the corridor, Berger, like the prototype of a German professor, talked for hours, spouting socialist theory. Debs wrote in *The Comrade* in April 1902:

It was at this time, when the first glimmerings of Socialism were beginning to penetrate, that Victor L. Berger--and I have loved him ever since--came to Woodstock, as if a providential instrument, and delivered the first impassioned message of Socialism I had ever heard--the very first to set the "wires humming in my system." As a souvenir of that visit there is in my library a volume of "Capital" by Karl Marx, inscribed with the compliments of Victor L. Berger which I cherish as a token of priceless value.

When Berger was lining up votes for Debs at the People's Party convention in 1896, "Debs' mind was unsettled....He hesitated to identify himself completely with a capitalist reform party like the Populists", which was why he did not permit the use of his name for nomination, according to Ray Ginger in his biography of Debs, *The Bending Cross*.

Debs made up his mind after the defeat of the Democratic-Populist fusion and Bryan, for which he had campaigned, that the reform movement could not overcome the system in power. On January 1, 1897 Debs published his personal manifesto in the union publication, *Railway Times*:

The issue is Socialism versus Capitalism. I am for Socialism because I am for humanity. We have been cursed with the reign of gold long enough. Money constitutes no proper basis of civilization. The time has come to regenerate society--we are on the eve of a universal change.

Debs' declaration was the awaited signal for concerted action in forming a party. In Berger's rooms on old Reed Street, now South Second

Street, just north of Greenfield Avenue, Berger, Heath, and a few others laid plans, wrote letters, and did the spadework that resulted in the call for a convention in Chicago. The preliminary work was arduous, for it encompassed and sought to draw together elements of a Socialist movement that were scattered all over the country. So the convention itself was rather complex.

The Socialist movement then

...was grouped around such enterprises as the weekly papers of J. A. Wayland, *The Coming Nation*, and subsequently, *The Appeal to Reason*, both of which reached a circulation unparalleled by that of any previous socialist publication in this country...and the formation of a number of independent socialist and semi-socialist clubs and societies.... A socialist organization of utopian coloring, the Brotherhood of the Cooperative Commonwealth had been called into existence by *The Coming Nation*.⁷

The elements of the convention were the Brotherhood, the remnants of the American Railway Union, and the independent Socialists. They united and created a party. It was the Social Democracy of America, The date was June 18, 1897.

In the first days the party was called "the Debs movement" after the man who was universally called Gene. Local organizations quickly took shape in Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and other cities, east and west. But it became "a Berger movement", too, as it developed in Milwaukee. And it was appropriate, as Emil Seidel recalled, that it was--

In Milwaukee Gene organized Branch One of the Social Democracy at a meeting in The West Side Turn Hall. I was the first one to hit the sawdust trail and sign my name.

Branch Two, Three, Big-Four, Five and Six followed in short order. To avoid confusion, we later named the branches after the wards.

They were English-speaking branches. Seidel transferred from the German *Vereinigung*, which disbanded. Most of its members joined their respective ward branches. The remainder reorganized into a German language branch of the Social Democracy. Eventually, a dozen or more different foreign language branches were set up in Milwaukee County.

In Branch One that was formally set up on July 9 and met in Ethical Hall on Jefferson Street, Seidel became acquainted, he wrote, with Charles B. Whitnall, Howard Tuttle, Frederic Heath, Eugene Rooney, "and other Socialists of more or less purely native stock". The Fabian Society members, too, had transferred to Branch One.

Insights into the ways of rank-and-file party members were provided in the firsthand record of the meetings of Branch Two which was formed two weeks after Branch One--in the "Minute Book", which I read in 1965 at the now-razed headquarters of the Socialist Party of Wisconsin.

In faded ink on yellowed pages of a composition book whose covers were kept together with adhesive tape, the longhand account, dated July 22nd/97, began: "Massmeeting called to form a Local Branch of the Social Democracy of America in the twenty-first ward at said meeting a club was formed of which the following names are the charter members."

The names of 18 men, with their addresses, were listed, the first of which was Frank C. Schultz, 1489 - 6th Street.

The record showed that "the executive Board of The Social Democracy" petitioned for a charter for a local branch and recorded that "the admission fee of twenty-five cents per member has been collected and is in the hands of the temporary secretary."

"Rules and Regulations" of eight articles were listed which included one that "The proceedings shall be conducted in the english (sic) language. But it shall be understood that each member shall be allowed to choose the language in which he wishes to speak."

That the meetings shall be held on the second and last Saturday of each month was provided by another article.

The first executive board elected by Branch Two was composed of Fred Frisch, chairman; Joe Brown, vice chairman, Paul F. Manhardt, secretary; Henry Grobe, treasurer; and Anton Palm, organizer.

At the next meeting of the branch, two new members were admitted. For the next three years, two or three new members were regularly accepted at the meetings, although there were noted occasional transfers to other branches.

At the fourth meeting, on August 28, a motion was made that "every member should bring his wife to our meetings and was so carried. Our worthy chairman was instructed to go and invite our women which he very quickly agreed to do."

With ladies present at the very next meeting, on September 11, "a very able address on Socialism" was made to them by "Mr. Palm". And a motion was made that "the first meetings be set aside as special meetings for women and was so carried".

Women, usually wives of members, were "taken up as members of this club" at subsequent meetings.

The words in the Minute Book recording the next couple of meetings were not many, but they did tell that the discussions were serious. The subject was "colonization".

A doctrinal difference characterized the entire existence of the Social Democracy *per se*. The divergence was within it from its conception until it resulted in the schism from which the Social Democratic Party was created in the following year.

The dispute was between: the utopists, mostly native-born radicals in the Middle West and West, who believed the only way to escape from brutal, competitive, industrial capitalism was to do just that, to split off, to colonize somewhere in the West; and those who would stay with the American people where they were and work with them through the political means at hand to bring about change.

The colonizers in the Social Democracy had gotten a committee appointed that was collecting funds for the purchase of land in Colorado. There a colony would be set up that would capture the state government which, in turn, would introduce a socialist regime.

How Branch Two responded to the colonization drive was recorded in the Minute Book: First, at a meeting on September 25, "After an exciting debate on the question of sending money for the colonization fund, the meeting was closed." The question was made the subject of a special meeting on October 2 which decided that "the members should contribute to the colonization fund whatever amount they were able to give. Also that the secretary be instructed to write to Chicago that this branch is not in a financial condition to send twenty dollars (\$20) at once.... Mr. Palm was elected a temporary collector".

The sense of unity in the class struggle was evidenced on October 30, 1897 when the branch voted to "donate two dollars toward defraying the expenses of getting Mr. Bergmann (*sic*) pardoned for shooting Mr. Fricke (*sic*) during the Homestead strike". That was Alexander Berkman, a young anarchist from New York, who shot and seriously wounded Henry Clay Frick, the "Coke King," in the Homestead lockout in 1892. Berkman had been sentenced to twenty-two years imprisonment.

The idea of starting a daily English newspaper was discussed by the Socialists from the beginning of the organization. That this matter had been raised in the county central committee was reported to the branch at its meeting on October 30; it was discussed again by the branch a month later when it "was laid over until further notice".

Another reflection of the varieties of thinking of the times was made in a note of a meeting in November: "an interesting discussion between some of our members and S.L.P. (Socialist Labor Party) members in conjunction with People's Party members."

An important night was that of January 5, 1898, a night of decision to act to carry out the purpose of the organization. So it appears from the record. It was the tenth meeting of the branch. A report given that the central committee by a vote taken at the last meeting had decided "that this organization will enter into the political arena at this spring's election. After debating on this question pro and con it was decided by the majority of the members present that this Branch

No. 2 of the Social Democracy of the 21st ward will do all in their power to carry their end to a successful issue. After drinking one more glass of wine which Mrs. Liebisch very kindly had provided for us we bid her and Brother Liebisch a very good night and adjourned."

Some of the members continued to disagree with the decision to start political action, so the matter was reconsidered at a meeting on February 26, 1898. "It was moved and carried that this branch will stand by its decision that it came to on Jan. 5th/98."

Meanwhile, activities to carry out the political decision were begun, some to raise money that was to be used by the party for many years to come. First, a convention was called by the central committee, held on February 1 at Liederkrantz Hall. A "little mask ball" brought in a net of \$1.75 for the campaign fund.

By another action of the branch, "the 50 cents that were left over from the debating society that was formed from the old People's Party Club" was added to the campaign fund.

Every member was to be "given 10 of the Merrie Englands to distribute where they will do the most good. But not to sell them for less than 2 cents per copy". This was decided at the first meeting in March. At the next meeting the ward was "divided up into sections so that each member will have the same amount of territory to go over in distributing our platforms".

(*Merrie England* was a book first published in 1894 in Great Britain, whose chapters were "A Series of Letters to John Smith of Oldham, a Practical Working Man." The author, Robert Blatchford, wrote to "Dear John...about the realities of capitalism and the necessity for socialism". It was an immediate best seller.)

(The Monthly Review Press, which reprinted *Merrie England* in 1966 as one of the "Classics of Radical Thought", said, "Its simplicity of style and the brilliance of its logic attracted the common man who bought it in such quantities as to make it one of the most widely-read books in history--more than two million copies were sold in Europe and the United States in a few years.")

The first four years of existence of Branch Two were recorded in the Minute Book with the minutes of the fourth year written in German. One sentence of a half dozen in the minutes of what evidently was a brief meeting on February 12, 1898 said, "Also was Victor L. Berger of Branch No. 1 admitted to membership in this club." Then, "No other business being before the house the meeting adjourned." The next time that Berger's name was mentioned was in the minutes for May 28, 1898: "Moved that Bro. Berger shall represent this Branch in the convention which will be held in Chicago commencing June 7th. Carried."

Additional notations about Berger were the following:

On February 9, 1900 "Comrade Victor L. Berger was present and explained the progress of the Party in the east." (The appellation

"comrade" appeared for the first time in the minutes for January 6, 1900, an evolvment from "brother" and from "mister".) A few weeks later, on March 2, 1900, a special meeting: "A motion made and carried to donate \$5.00 towards defraying V. L. Berger's expenses to represent us at the National Convention." On April 27, 1900: "Motion made and carried that we thank Comrade Berger for his kindness with presenting Branch No. 2 with 50 Merry (sic) Englands." On July 26, 1900, the branch voted approval of Berger, along with Debs and Heath and six others as nominees for the executive committee of the national party.

The municipal election in 1898 was held on April 5, but since there was no word in the Branch Two minutes about the results, perhaps because they seemed disappointing, it is opportune here to note what happened. It was the first election for the Socialist Party in Milwaukee.

The first city ticket, under the name of the Social Democracy, was made up of the following: Robert Meister, a machinist, for mayor; Howard Tuttle, a theatrical scene painter, for treasurer; Thomas C. P. Meyers for comptroller; and Richard Elsner for city attorney.

Meister received 2,444 votes. David S. Rose, the Democratic-Populist candidate for mayor, was the winner with 26,219. The Republican, William Geuder, got 18,207.

The Social Democrat, the organ of the Social Democracy of America, which before had been Debs' *Railway Times*, hailed the election as a significant beginning in the political struggles that were to come.

The platform of the Milwaukee Socialists included demands for municipal ownership of public utilities, employment of union labor, the eight-hour day on city work, public work for the unemployed, and free medical and legal services for the needy.

On June 25, 1898 Branch Two voted to "adopt the platform of the Social Democratic Party of America" and became a branch of the new party that had been founded in Chicago on June 11 and which became the party of the Milwaukee Socialists who were among its principal organizers.

The nature and vigor of the activities of Branch Two in politics, fund-raising for campaigns, and spreading the word of socialism for the next two years was told in items such as the following from the minutes.

On August 27, 1898 the branch voted to send six delegates to the party's state convention.

With the election coming up in November, the branch on September 8 voted to have a meeting every week, then on October 15 decided to hold three mass meetings before the election, two in the 21st Ward and the other in the Town of Milwaukee.

Plans "to confer with other clubs in accordance to printing of pamphlets" were made at a special meeting on September 17.

In December 1899 the branch voted "to write to the Bohemian branches in Chicago that ask aid to start a paper in that city, edited in Bohemian, to let us know how they are progressing and how soon they will publish it and after publication will do our utmost towards subscribing."

At the same meeting, it was decided to appoint a committee of three "to arrange a masquerade ball for the near future". Also it was voted "to donate \$3 towards the agitation fund" of the S.D.P.

The masquerade committee reported on January 6, 1900 that the ball would be held on February 17, and it was agreed "to rent Shooting Park Hall for the occasion".

An agitation committee of three named at the January 6 meeting arranged for a lecture on Sunday, January 28, by "Dr. Voelkel".

A debate "on the subject of Trusts" was held on a later date.

Branch Two elected delegates in February to represent both the 13th and the 21st Wards at the party's city convention.

For the city election, the branch in March purchased 2,000 copies of *The Social Democrat* and held four mass meetings in the last week. Other literature bought by the branch were pamphlets on municipal ownership and subscriptions for *The Appeal to Reason*.

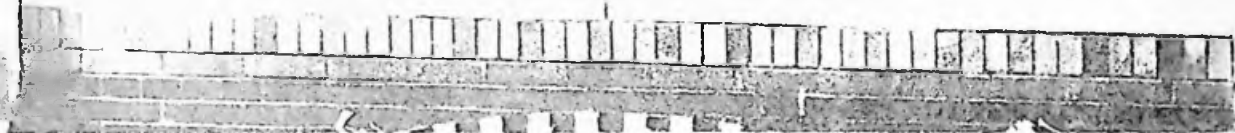
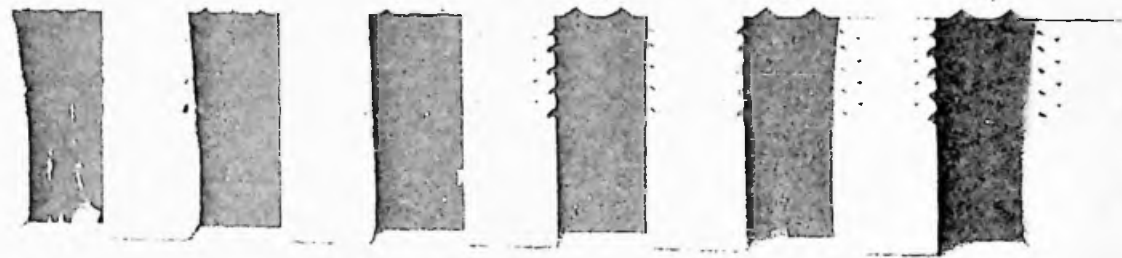
A fair picture of what the meetings of virtually all the party's branches in Milwaukee were like was provided by the close-up of Branch Two. The Minute Book indicated the types of discussion, planning, and activities of the branches which were the bottom support of the Social Democratic Party. There came to be a branch in every ward of the city as well as in a number of cities and towns throughout the state, and there were also branches of nationality groups.

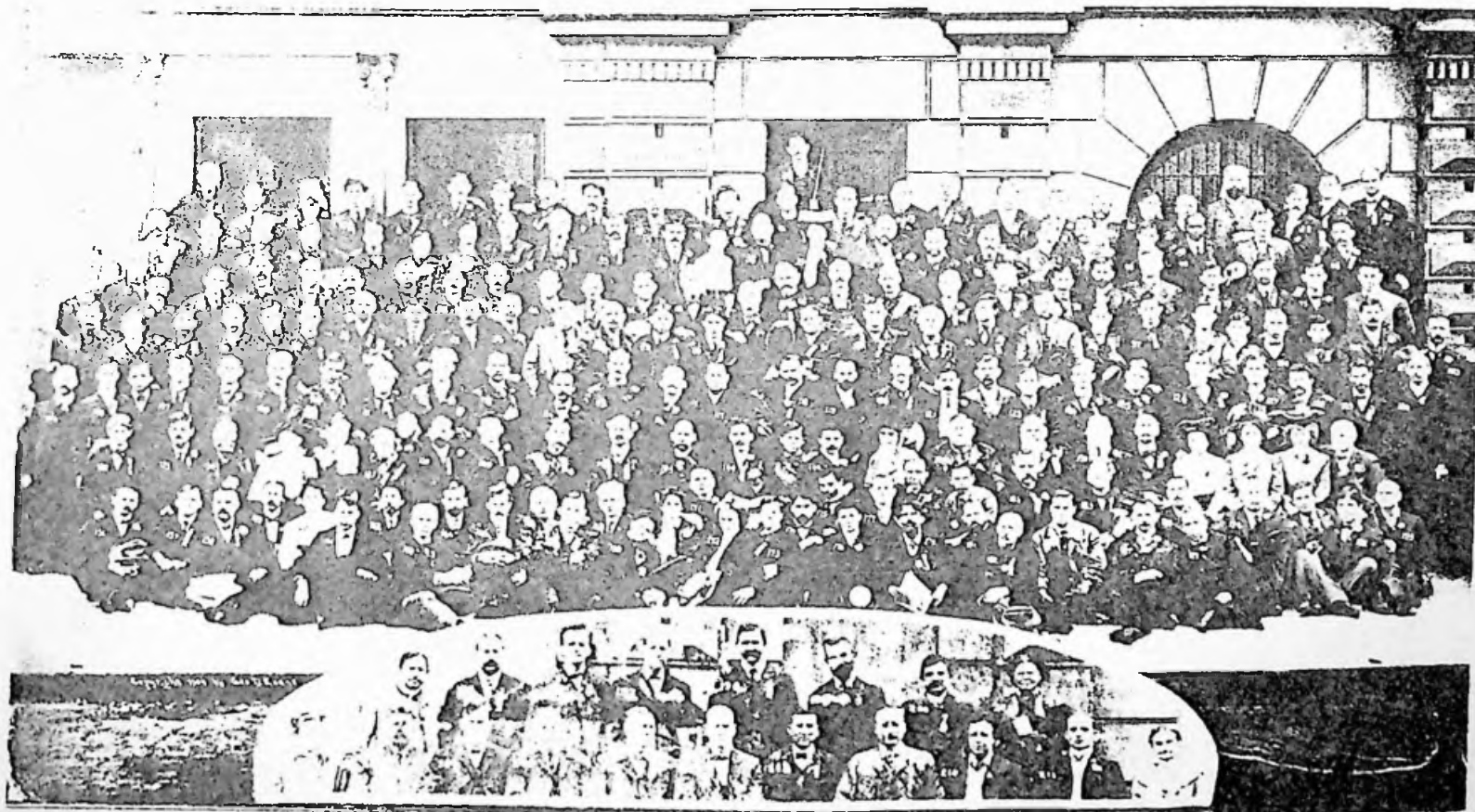
In Milwaukee the branches elected delegates to the county central committee which was a unit of the state party which held conventions at which the delegates adopted platforms and elected candidates.

The character differences in the branches reflected the character differences in the wards--in the residents, their nationalities and religions, the numbers of socialists and sympathizers, and leaders and their personalities.

The 21st Ward, which was at first Branch Two, was a Socialist stronghold. So was the 20th, to which Emil Seidel transferred from Branch One. The 7th, 10th, and 25th--north and west side wards--were solid; but, in contrast, no Socialist was ever elected to public office by the 18th, on the east side, which was a "silk stocking" ward.

Left to right: Cypriani, Van Kol, Troelstra, Ugarte, Belfort Bax, Nemec, Olaf Kringen, Sorkup, Rosa Luxemburg, Adler, Plechanoff (front), Bracke, Kautsky, Knudsen, Walecki, Hillquit, Cambie, Naokoji, Longuet, Anseele, and Ferri. Photograph by permission of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.





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Delegates to the First National Convention

—OF THE—
SOCIALIST PARTY

Of the United States of America

Held at Chicago, Illinois

May 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th, 1901

Two hundred and twelve attended the First National Convention of the Socialist Party of the United States at Chicago, May 1-6, 1901.

Frederic Heath, Ira Cross, Victor Berger, and J.N.A. Spence represented Wisconsin. John M. Work, later of Wisconsin, was among the Iowa delegates. Photograph by permission of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

The 20th Ward was the first branch to install new members with a ritual and a pledge of loyalty to principles--a pledge and procedure adopted by the party and embodied in the county constitution in 1917, according to Seidel.

It was a *gemuetlich* branch, the 20th. It had, Seidel wrote,

...a sound nucleus of veteran German Social Democrats who loved song. They started the *Vorwaerts Maennerchor* (the Forward Male Chorus). Our Branch meetings were regularly opened with singing the first verse of the *Arbeiter Marseillaise* and the last verse at the closing. When the old comrades passed away and the new generation ruled...we had no more singing at the meeting.

But the "singingest" was the 22nd Ward branch, which was organized as Branch Four of the Social Democracy. This one, too, and other branches and activities are described by Seidel in his memoirs.

"The Big Four," later Branch 22, was made up largely from members of the *Sozialistischer Maennerchor*. Did you love song? Attend an affair of Branch 22. There to one side stood a group which under the direction of Richard Bayer sang one song after another. You could also hear them at our County Picnics.

Branch 11, to which we owed our best organizer, Eddie Melms, grew out of *The Coming Nation* club which joined our party in a body. When that happened, we were jubilant for it was a sign that our principles were taking root with the young generation without which we could never win.

Branch 17 which gave us such prominent Social Democrats as Arnold, Gauer, Metcalf, Quick had an auxiliary organization, the South Side Community Club. Every so often the club had an evening luncheon with a program of speaking, singing and story telling. Here Social Democrats could meet with sympathizers and others to carry on a little proselyting. Critics called them fishing parties.

.....

To raise funds, the County (Central Committee) arranged picnics, shows, bazaars, carnivals on a large scale. Only the largest halls sufficed. Our annual carnival was held in the old Exposition building until it was destroyed by fire. When the Auditorium was done, we used that.

The picnics of the party were the largest held in Milwaukee. The first two were held at Schlitz Park located where today Roosevelt Junior High School stands. At Pabst Park (now Garfield Park) we had our greatest successes.

The first national convention of the Social Democracy of America, as such, held in Chicago on June 7, 1898, was also the last. In the split that ended it, the historical irony would be that the winners that day would lose and the losers would win.

From the very outset it was clear there would be a fight to the finish between the colonizers and the political actionists. The fight started with the presentation of the platform committee's report which stated the positions of the contending sides. The majority report called for abandonment of the colonization scheme and the use of customary socialist propaganda methods. The minority report advocated colonization as the organization's main activity. The debate lasted until 2:30 in the morning. The delegates, who represented 94 branches of the party, voted 53 for the minority report and 37 for the majority report.

The outvoted delegates, who included a phalanx of those from Milwaukee, immediately strode out of the convention hall in a body, according to a stratagem determined beforehand. They agreed to get together in a few days.

The winners at the convention, left in complete control, got the colonization platform they wanted, but they lost the party. They had had trouble raising money for a proposed colony in Colorado. Later they started two ineffective communal colonies in the state of Washington, then dropped out of sight. A few Milwaukee socialists who had joined the colonists returned to the city afterward, "poorer but wiser", Seidel said.

The bolters met again on June 11. They had come to Chicago, the 37 of them, representing 66 branches of the Social Democracy, principally in Wisconsin, New York, and Massachusetts. Now they settled the business of starting a new party; they formed the Social Democratic Party of America.

The platform of the new party advocated government ownership of public utilities and monopolies, extension of equal rights to women, among other planks, to be achieved through political processes. The "utopian" planks were eliminated.

A national executive committee was elected, comprised of Berger, Debs, Heath, Jesse Cox, and Seymour Stedman.

Thus was the viable Socialist Party formed.

NOTES

1. E. L. Meyer, "Twilight of a Golden Age", *American Mercury*, August 1933.

2. This daily ceased publication in 1898, but its immediate successor, the German socialist weekly, the *Wisconsin Vorwaerts*, continued publication until 1932.

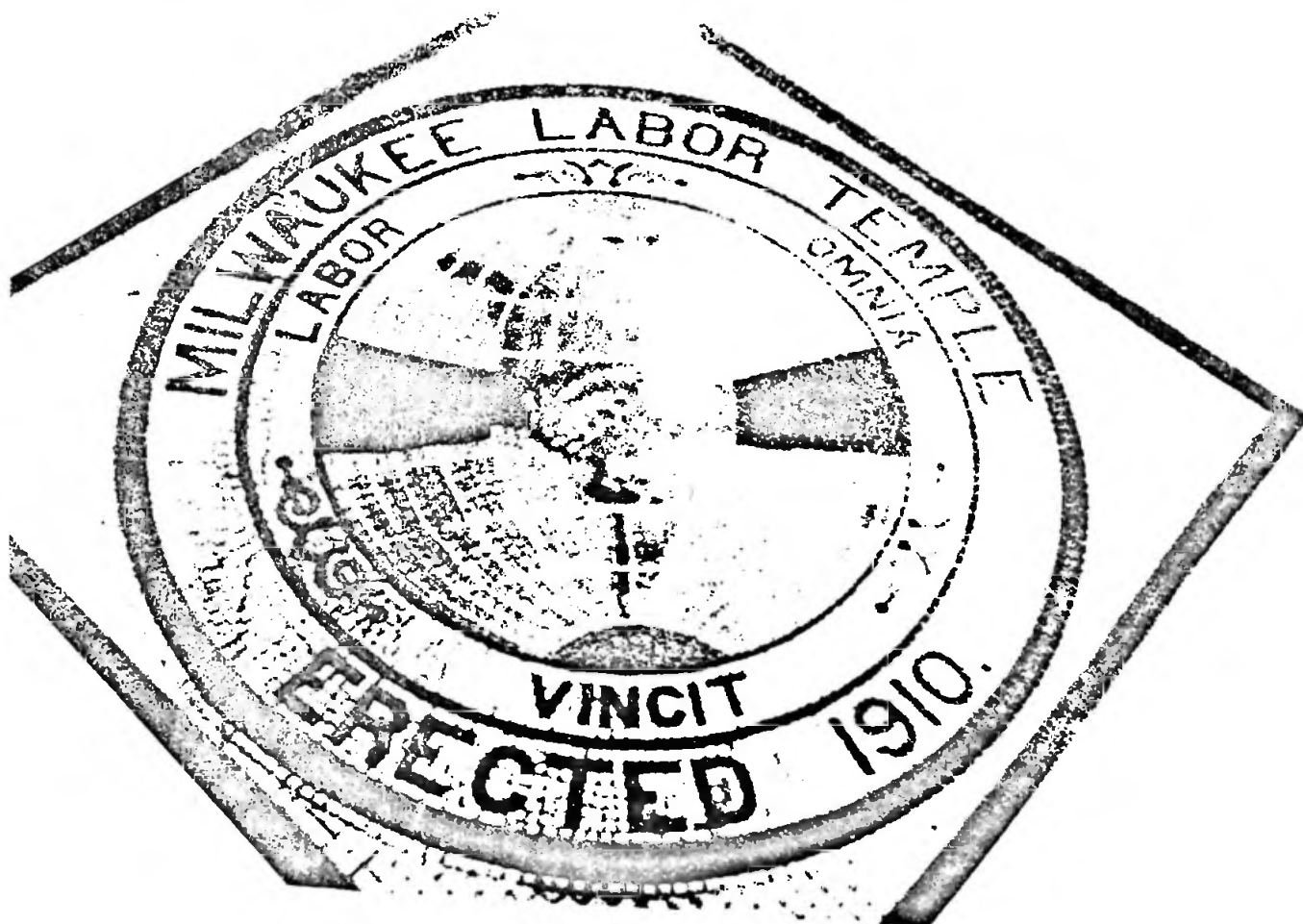
3. Emil Seidel, unpublished autobiography, Manuscripts Library, The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

4. *Ibid.*, *passim*.

5. McAlister Coleman, *Eugene V. Debs: A Man Unafraid* (New York: Greenberg, 1930) *passim*.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Morris Hillquit, *History of Socialism in the United States* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965, 1908), p. 301.



CHAPTER II

THE CRESCENDO YEARS

The growth of the Social Democratic Party of America was rapid from its inception to its zenith in 1912, both in the State of Wisconsin and in the nation.

The first two men to win public office on the Socialist ticket in America were Fred C. Haack and August L. Mohr in Sheboygan in the spring of 1898. They were elected as aldermen. For the city's eight wards, there had been in a column headed, "Individual Nominations", six candidates for alderman and six for supervisor, all identified individually as "Social Democrats".¹ In the Sheboygan elections thereafter, the party had its own column.

Haack and Mohr had joined the Social Democratic Party when it was organized in Sheboygan. Haack had been first elected alderman in 1897 at the age of twenty-one on the Populist ticket. The newspapers called him Red Haack.²

In the fall of 1899 two representatives in the Massachusetts legislature were elected on the Social Democratic Party ticket. They were James F. Carey and Lewis M. Scates. In December of the same year, two Social Democratic mayors were elected in Massachusetts--John C. Chase in Haverhill and C. H. Coulter in Brockton.

State and local Social Democratic tickets were nominated in New Hampshire, Connecticut, New York, Maryland, Illinois, Missouri, and California, besides Wisconsin and Massachusetts.

At the first Social Democratic Party convention on March 6, 1900 in Indianapolis the enrolled membership was reported to be 5,000. This convention initiated moves to effect amalgamation with the Rochester wing of the Socialist Labor Party. One of the prime moves was the nomination of a presidential ticket in that year's election with Eugene V. Debs of the Social Democratic Party for president and Job Harriman of the Socialist Labor Party for vice president.

The convention also empowered a committee of nine to arrange the terms of union with a like committee of the Rochester faction. Berger and Heath were members of the committee, as were Carey and Chase of Massachusetts. The committees met in New York on March 25 and spent two full days working out plans for the merger of the two organizations. But Berger did not attend the joint conference.

Morris Hillquit of New York City was a member of the Socialist Labor Party committee.

In his *History of Socialism in the United States*, published in 1908, Hillquit wrote that both wings of the Social Democratic Party (the name they adopted) worked harmoniously in "an energetic and enthusiastic campaign" for their joint ticket "and accomplished more toward effecting real union between them than all the prolonged negotiations of the past".

In the Socialists' first national campaign, the joint ticket of Debs and Harriman polled 94,864 votes. In Wisconsin 7,048 votes were cast for Debs and Harriman, of which 4,874 were in Milwaukee County. The next highest county votes were in Sheboygan, 876; Manitowoc, 169; Douglas, 133; and Racine, 123.

Following the election, a call was issued, Hillquit wrote,

...for a joint convention of all socialist organizations for the purpose of creating one united party...all socialist organizations, except the New York faction of the Socialist Labor Party (opposed to the Rochester faction), responded to the call.

When the convention assembled in Indianapolis on the 29th of July, 1901, it was found that the organizations participating in it represented an enrolled membership of no less than 10,000....

...124 delegates held 6,683 credentials from individual members....

...the convention decided...to complete all arrangements for the final amalgamation of the organizations represented then and there.

With this end in view a new platform and constitution were adopted....

The convention was the largest and most representative national gathering of socialists ever held in this country up to this time.

The composition of the convention served to demonstrate how much the character of the socialist movement had changed during the preceding few years. Out of the 124 delegates no more than 25 were foreign born; all the others were native Americans....

The convention adjourned as a harmonious body.³

The party created by the unity convention was named The Socialist Party, but a proviso in the constitution permitted the use of a different name where it conformed to a legal requirement (such as its

registration with a state government). The Wisconsin Socialists kept the name of the Social Democratic Party until 1916. Then at a state convention on June 17 in Racine the name was changed to the Socialist Party of Wisconsin, which has endured to this day.

Looking Backward was the title of a work of fiction by Edward Bellamy published in 1888 that described a society of cooperation and brotherhood in the year 2000. It was a best-seller of its day and sold over a million copies. Looking backward from our time through the rear-view mirror of history, it is clear that the socialist movement in the United States was in a crescendo from the turn of the century until the movement reached a culmination in 1912.

A long period of decline followed, marked by some ups and downs. The down-trend in strength and influence was caused, first, by internal conflicts between factions in the party; next, by struggle for survival in the tempests of emotions aroused by America's entrance into the World War in 1917, when, at the same time, the party was battered by government suits against its leaders; then, by stagnation during the careless years of the twenties. Interest in the Socialist Party sputtered in the beginning of the Depression, but those sparks of interest died out under the spell of enchantment cast by Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal in the thirties.

The popular votes received by Socialist candidates for the presidency are indices of the party's rise and decline. In the four elections during the period of growth, Debs was the candidate each time. His vote increased from 94,864 in 1900 to 402,895 in 1904, 420,890 in 1908, and 901,873 in 1912. In the latter year, Emil Seidel was the party's candidate for vice president.

War was the crucial issue in 1916, and Socialists helped re-elect Woodrow Wilson whose campaign was mainly based on "He Kept Us Out of War". Allan L. Benson, the Socialist candidate, received 585,113 votes.

Debs, in Atlanta prison for having delivered an antiwar speech at Canton, Ohio received 919,799 votes in 1920, the most a Socialist candidate was ever to win. It was the first presidential election in which women voted (the suffrage amendment having become effective in August that year), and the total vote was the largest; the percentage received by Debs was 3.4 compared to 6.0 in 1912.

The Socialists supported Robert M. LaFollette for president in 1924 and ran no candidate of their own. In 1928, and for twenty years thereafter, Norman Thomas was the Socialist standard-bearer. His votes in six successive elections were as follows: 1928--267,420, 1932--884,781, 1936--187,720, 1940--99,557, 1944--80,426, 1948--139,521. In 1952, the Socialist candidate for president was Darlington Hoopes; he received 18,322 votes.

The crescendo of socialism in Wisconsin, which paralleled that in the nation, can be said to have had its starting point with the first political speech made by Eugene Debs for the party.

He delivered it in Milwaukee in July 1898 right after the formation in Chicago of the Social Democratic Party of America. In the fall, the party entered a full ticket for state offices and in Milwaukee a full ticket for county offices and nearly a full assembly ticket.

Simple numbers that indicate the party growth in the state are the votes received by Socialist candidates for governor, starting with the election in 1898 when Howard Tuttle got 2,544. The numbers then increased as follows: 6,590 in 1900 for Tuttle, 15,790 in 1902 for Emil Seidel, 24,857 (5 percent of the total vote cast) in 1904 for William A. Arnold, 24,437 (7.6 percent) in 1906 for Winfield R. Gaylord, 28,583 in 1908 for Harvey D. Brown, and 39,547 (12 percent) in 1910 for W. A. Jacobs. The latter was a peak until 1918 when Seidel's 57,523 votes were 17 percent of the total.

The first state platform of the Social Democratic Party in 1898 contained, besides the standard demands such as national ownership of railroads, new planks for the farmers, including state construction of elevators and silos and extension of telephone systems to rural areas.

Each election in the city of Milwaukee during the upswing marked a new high for the Socialists. The total vote of 2,430 received by the candidate for mayor, Meister, in 1898, increased to 2,585 in 1900 when Heath headed the city ticket. From then on it grew apace. In 1904 it reached 15,343 when Berger was the candidate. The Socialists elected their first aldermen that year, nine, and four county supervisors, two justices of the peace, and two constables. So, 17 Socialists were elected.

Each ward had two aldermen, and there were 23 wards then. Emil Seidel, who was one of the two Socialists elected aldermen in the 20th Ward, remarked, "In that first victory we captured four and a half wards".

The victorious comrades, as identified by Seidel, were: 10th Ward--Heath, news artist, and Albert J. Welch, typesetter; 11th--Edmund T. Melms, syrup refiner, and Gustav Wild, machinist; 20th--Karl Malewski, cobbler (who spoke only German), and Seidel, wood carver and patternmaker; 21st--Henry W. Grantz, machinist, and Edward Schranz, custom tailor; 22nd--Nicholas Petersen, a naturalized American citizen of Danish birth.

The supervisors elected were Frank Boness, 9th Ward; James P. Sheehan, 11th; Charles Jeske, 20th; and Supervisor Gustave Geerds.

The first Socialists in the Wisconsin legislature were elected in Milwaukee in November 1904, one to the State senate and five to the assembly. All were trade unionists. And all were young working men. Jacob Rummel, the state senator from the Sixth District, was a foreman in a cigar factory. Of the assemblymen, William J. Alldrige, Fifth District, was a machinist; Frederick C. Brockhausen, Eleventh District,

was a cigar maker and secretary-treasurer of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor; Edmund J. Berner, Ninth District, also a cigar maker; Herman Hansen, Fifteenth District, a tanner; and August Strehlow, Sixteenth District, a painter.

In the municipal elections in 1906, the gains continued. William A. Arnold, the candidate for mayor, got 16,837 votes--an increase of 1,494 over 1904, and 12 Socialists were elected to the common council. In 1908 Seidel received 20,887 votes for mayor, missing election by only 2,219. It was certain then that the Socialists were destined to rule.

The Democratic and Republican Parties tried to stem the tide by expropriating for their own platforms the Socialist planks of home rule, stronger control of public utility corporations, the initiative, referendum, and recall. But the attempt did not avail.

In 1910 the Socialists swept into power. In April they elected Seidel, the first Socialist mayor of a major American city; 21 of 35 council seats, including Berger as one of seven aldermen-at-large; a majority of the county board of supervisors; and two civil judges. In November Berger ran for congress in the Fifth Congressional District and was elected the first Socialist to the house of representatives. The Socialists also elected 13 state legislators and the seven major county officers.

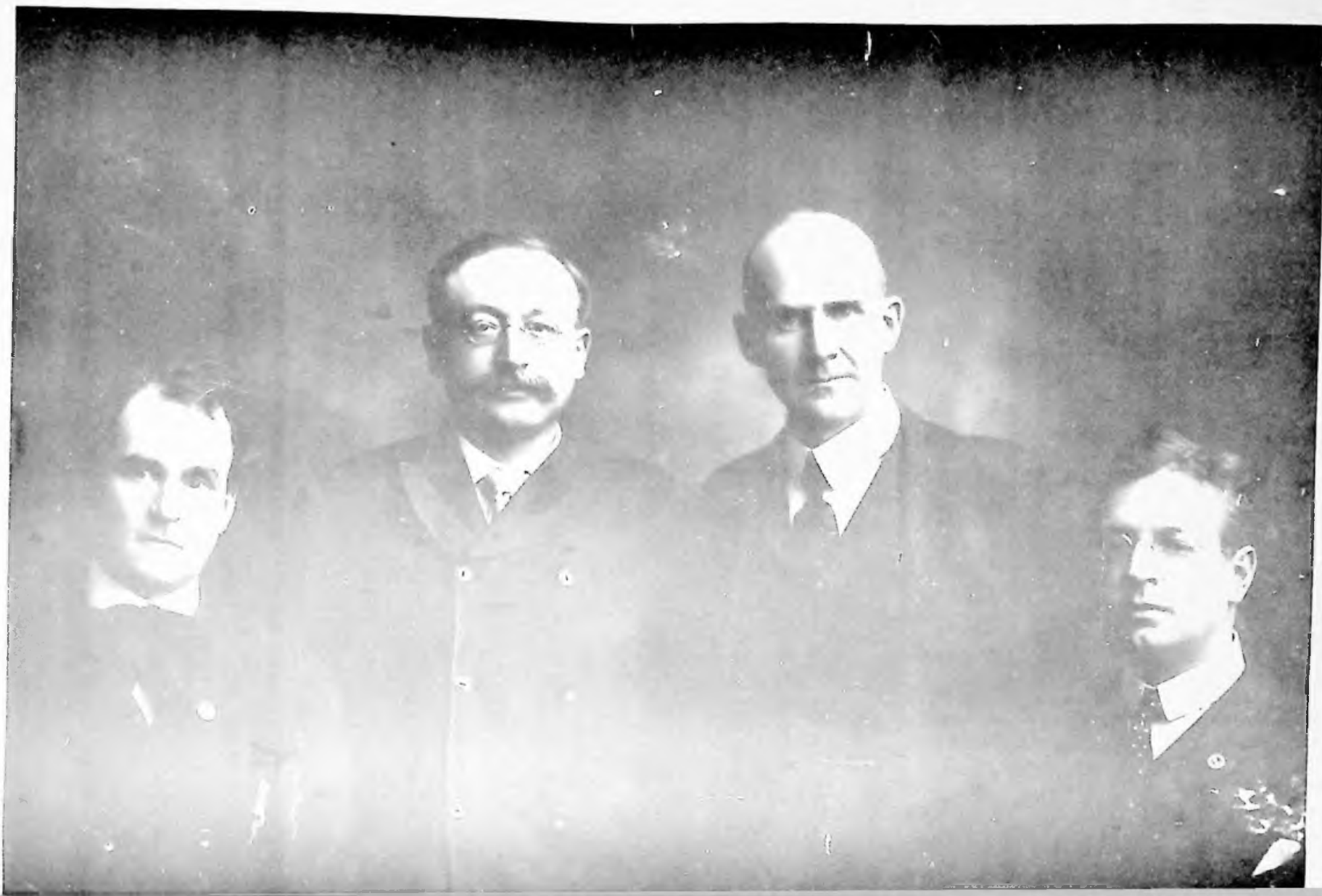
In the state outside of Milwaukee, the movement spread, too. Its growth was spotted, stronger in some places and among certain peoples, and the pace uneven--then there was a remarkable spurt in the thirties, which we shall look at later.

In 1900 there were 30 Socialist branches in Wisconsin, it was reported at the state convention which was attended that year by 143 delegates from Milwaukee, Racine, and Sheboygan.

Sheboygan was conspicuous from the beginning as a Socialist burg. A Social-Democratic club had been formed there in the 1890's. The election of two aldermen in 1898 has been noted. The first Socialist mayor in Wisconsin was elected in Sheboygan in 1903. He was Charles A. Born. Something of a political boss, he had joined the Social Democratic Party in 1901, then ran that year for mayor and received 1,527 votes, trailing the Republican winner by 179 votes and the second-place Democrat by 72. Three Socialists were elected to the city council.

When he won in 1903, Born got 1,717 votes to 1,531 for the Republican candidate and 1,274 for the Democrat. But Born was not a party member for long. He was expelled in 1904 for appointing old party politicians to the library board, reducing the assessment of the company that owned the waterworks, and favoring a franchise for a streetcar company.⁴

Left to right, Frederic Heath, Victor L. Berger, Eugene V. Debs, and Seymour Stedman.



Frederic Heath, right, conferring
with Victor Berger in Berger's
quarters. Undated photograph.
Reproduced by permission of *The
Milwaukee Journal*.

Manitowoc elected a Socialist mayor in 1905. He was Henry Stolz, Jr., who ran in the "Individual Nominations" column and received 195 votes more than the "nonpartisan" candidate of the old parties. One Socialist alderman was also elected.

In other spring elections in 1905, the party elected three aldermen and two supervisors in Racine, a justice of the peace in Ashland, and a constable in Whitewater.

A special element of the party's strength in the first couple of decades was the different nationalities. Foreign language speaking branches sprang up all over the state as well as in Milwaukee, some in such numbers that they formed federations.

"A dozen or more" foreign language branches were started in Milwaukee County, according to Emil Seidel. He wrote, "These foreign language Socialists counted among our most loyal comrades and were the hardest workers for our cause--the backbone of our bundle brigade."⁵ (Bundle brigade was a term applied through the years to the house-to-house peddlers of the party's campaign papers.)

The foreign language branches were Bohemian, Danish, Finnish, German, Italian, Jewish, Polish, Russian, Scandinavian, Slavonian, and Slovak. The Finnish and Scandinavian locals formed Socialist federations.

Cities where the different nationalities organized were Racine, Kenosha, Beloit, Superior, Ashland, Green Bay, among others, besides Milwaukee.

The focus on one of the nationalities, the Finns, is provided in a book by John I. Kolehmainen and George W. Hill, *Haven in the Woods*, that relates how early in 1905 Finnish societies in Milwaukee and Superior joined the Socialist Party. They were the *Imatra* societies affiliated with the *Imatra* League, "a fraternal and cultural federation of so-called workingmen's associations". They acted "in response to the recommendation of a convention held in Cleveland in October 1904 that the local chapters join the American Socialist Party."⁶

"Only by so doing, the delegates had insisted, 'can our working class movement have significance and influence in the development of Socialism in this country'."

The Finnish Socialist movement spread rapidly throughout the state. Four societies with 120 members in early 1906 increased to 16 societies with 537 members, of whom 148 were women, late in 1911.

The numbers and names in the early years are the evidence of the party's flourishing. What vitalized the movement as a whole were the same dreams as those of the Wisconsin Finns. Kolehmainen and Hill wrote:

An increasing number of Finns saw in Socialism a movement armed with the powerful and steadfast weapons of enlightenment and culture....They were joined by the growing body of emigrants from the cities of Finland where they had been touched by a rapidly developing working class movement.

Propaganda committees, numbering eleven in Wisconsin in 1911, were given the major responsibility for devising and executing measures that would drive out the private profit system and usher in a Socialist state. Socialist newspapers and periodicals,...and Finnish books and pamphlets were distributed among the unbelievers.

To help members understand the Marxist tenets, debates were held on such questions as these: "Do the poor have the right to criticize the existing order?" "Is class consciousness the same as class hatred?" "Can the Socialist commonwealth be realized?"

.

Other nationality groups, too, had to be shown the Socialist road. Italian workers in Red Granite and Kenosha, for example, were approached by Finnish Socialists bearing armfuls of Italian-language literature. The Kenosha Finns, especially, took the missionary task seriously, twelve of the city's thirty Finnish residents being party members in 1907.⁷

When Debs opened the party's first presidential campaign in 1900, he said, "I look into the future with absolute confidence....I can see the first struggling rays of the rising sun of the cooperative commonwealth; it will look down on a nation in which man and woman... will enjoy...a land without a master, a land without a slave."⁸

Frederic Heath, in a conversation with this writer in 1935, told of an incident when he was working for the *Milwaukee Sentinel* in the 1890's. An agent for a life insurance company called on him to sell him a policy. As he recalled, with a smile, in a low voice, Heath said he explained to the man that it would be foolish to buy a policy because in a few years such policies would not be needed--in the cooperative commonwealth they would be obsolete.

A distinct history concentrated on the beliefs in socialism would of itself be voluminous. But attention here to the dreams, visions, and prophecies of the socialists who started the party is to recognize that the beliefs were an extremely vital factor in the rise of the socialist tide.

Diversity and unity were co-mingled in those beliefs. Differences among socialists existed in pre-history days of the socialist movement. In the nineteenth century, a Nationalist movement split from the Socialist Laborites following publication of Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, a movement that sought to "Yankeeify" socialism.

Origins of the different strands of which the movement was braided were to be found in environments and conditions, many in other lands, where oppression bred a spirit of revolt and leftwingers, where the co-existence of conspicuous wealth and dreadful poverty bred a spirit of compassion and Christian Socialists...and the strands were many.

The movement included "gradualists" as well as "revolutionists", and "freethinkers" as well as "traditionalists"; also "prohibitionists" and "wets", "puritans" and "hedonists", "vegetarians and carnivores", et alii.

What brought and kept together different men and women believing in different things was a common faith in a better world on earth that was close at hand. The world in all its aspects cried out for change, and change was certain; this was the common faith. Faith in humanity was the *leitmotif* of socialism; in the prelude was sounded the certitude of the collapse of the rotten capitalist system, which was to be followed, as the night the day, by the "Cooperative Commonwealth and the Brotherhood of Man".

Perhaps "faith" is too much an everyday word naming too common a thing to describe the spirit of socialism of the early days. "Every Socialist is in the beginning something of a chiliast," Daniel Bell says.⁹ The chiliast envisions a "leap" from the present to "a far-arching goal" in the future--the ethical goal of justice and brotherhood--"across a yawning abyss that can be spanned only by a leap."

Along the way to the party's eventual anticlimax, one of the "basic problems of socialist strategy" was how to discipline the chiliastic zeal and hold it in readiness for the "revolution"--that kept receding on the horizon.

(Chiliasm is belief in the second coming of Christ and of a paradise on earth that would be established without violence. Chiliasts were strong in Bohemia in 1420, but when the date had passed for which the coming had been prophesied, they flared up against the evildoers whom they blamed for the postponement of the millenium. The chiliasts then were socialists too! They believed that property should be owned by the people, not the church.)

In Wisconsin the Social Democratic Party state conventions in the crescendo years adopted platforms that demanded "nationalization of all the trusts, notably the coal trust, the meat trust, the oil trust, the sugar trust, the farming machinery trust, and others of the same kind...

national ownership of the railroads, telegraphs, telephones, express companies and steamship lines...", among other specifics, then declared:

If we get political power in this state we will carry out these and other social reforms...(but these measures) are to be viewed as mere palliatives, capable of being carried out even under present conditions....The people should move onward to the conquest of all public powers; to an entire change of the present system for one which will secure to the people collectively the blessings of our modern inventions, and a standard of civilization and culture unknown in history.

The closing words of those first Wisconsin platforms were "to the economically oppressed we call in the immortal words"of Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*: "'Proletarians of all countries, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains, and a world to gain.'"

N O T E S

1. *The Sheboygan Telegram*, April 6, 1898.
2. *The Milwaukee Leader*, May 26, 1932.
3. Morris Hillquit, *History of Socialism in the United States* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965, 1908), p. 308.
4. *Social Democratic Herald* (Milwaukee), January 23, 1904.
5. Emil Seidel, unpublished autobiography, Manuscripts Library, The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, p. 40.
6. John I. Kolehmainen and George W. Hill, *Haven in the Woods, The Story of the Finns in Wisconsin* (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1951), p. 119.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 118-123.
8. Howard H. Quint, *The Forging of American Socialism: Origins of the Modern Movement* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1953), p. 369.
9. Daniel Bell, "The Background and Development of Marxian Socialism in the United States," *Socialism and American Life*, Donald Drew Egbert and Stow Persons, editors (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), pp. 218-219.

CHAPTER III

THE PERSONAL UNION

Trade unionists formed the Socialist Party in Milwaukee, and socialists organized the unions, the Milwaukee Federated Trades Council, and the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor. The trade unionists were socialists, and the socialists were trade unionists; they were the same people. A number of them have been identified in the foregoing chapter.

"The secret of success of the Milwaukee Socialists was their close alliance with the trade unions," wrote the historian, David A. Shannon, explaining that Milwaukee was "the strongest center of Socialist strength in the country."¹ But it was more than an alliance; it was integration. The integration was the foundation of the party--and it was not exactly a "secret".

The integration of socialism and trade unionism in Milwaukee was one of Victor Berger's master accomplishments, an integration he had worked for consistently from the time he arrived in Milwaukee until his death. During those years the leaders of the state and city central labor bodies and most of the local unions and many of the members were Socialist Party members. At the same time, union leaders represented the party in the city and county governments and the state legislature.

The integration was not invented in Milwaukee, but it was nurtured there, developed from historical strands.

Following some of the strands back, the year 1827 appears as a coincidence. It was the year when the American trade union movement began and the year when the term "socialist" made its first known appearance in print.

According to the pinpointing by the labor historian, Selig Perlman:

The American labor movement began in 1827 when several trades in Philadelphia organized the Mechanics Union of Trade Associations, which was, so far as now known, the first city central organization of trades in the world. This Union, originally intended as an economic organization, changed to a political one in the following year and initiated what was probably the most interesting and typically American labor movement--a struggle for equality of citizenship.²

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In other cities the example in Philadelphia was followed; local labor parties were formed in at least 15 states. These political organizations did not last more than a few years, but afterward, in the 1830's, other unions and central bodies were founded that eschewed politics.

The panic of 1837 brought a depression that lasted a decade, and with it the American labor movement virtually collapsed. But when the country emerged from the slough of hard times, unions started up again. In August 1847 the first evidence of unionism appeared in Milwaukee when 40 masons and bricklayers struck for an increase in wages, from \$1.50 to \$1.75 a day. They lost.³

The historian of socialism, George Lichtheim, cites the *Cooperative Magazine* in England, founded by followers of Robert Owen, as the source of the first printed use of the word "socialist" in November 1827 "to designate adherence to Owen's doctrine...(which) implied that industrial wealth should be owned not individually but in common, on a cooperative basis, and those who held this view were styled 'Communions' or 'Socialists'."⁴

A branch of the first socialist international organization, the *International Workingmen's Association*, was set up in Milwaukee in 1871 (emphasis supplied). The "*First Internationale*" had been founded by Karl Marx in London in 1864. The branch, composed of Germans, folded up in a few years. Some members who believed in Lassalle's stress on political action organized in 1874 the Social Democratic Party of North America. Ferdinand Lassalle in 1863 had founded the first socialist party in Germany, the *Universal German Workingmen's Association* (emphasis supplied). The Milwaukee party of 1874 was superseded in 1876 by the *Workingmen's Party of the United States* which included a miscellany of socialists (emphasis supplied). Then in 1877 a branch of the *Socialist Labor Party* was started in Milwaukee (emphasis supplied).

In Europe, in America, in Milwaukee, the socialists were workingmen. They were of that species.

Unification of the local unions was accomplished by the organization of the Milwaukee Federated Trades Council in 1887. The Trades Council was to be the trade union movement of the Milwaukee area for a half-century--the central representative government of the workers organized for economic aims. And the Trades Council can be said to have had a continuous existence to this day as the central body of American Federation of Labor unions, though it merged with the CIO Industrial Union Council in 1959 to form the present Milwaukee County Labor Council.

The main circumstance under which the socialists founded the Trades Council was a conflict that raged all over the country between the

Noble Order of the Knights of Labor and the craft unions which were in the process of establishing the American Federation of Labor.

The Milwaukee socialists opposed the Knights. They called to help them Paul Grottkau from Chicago, a Berliner who had fled from Germany in 1878 when Bismarck's Socialist Law prohibited any public activity of the Social Democratic Party. A natural orator, he led the organization of the city's "free unions" into a Central Labor Union on March 31, 1886. The central body was formed by delegates from the Carpenters, Hod Carriers, Custom Tailors, Metal Workers, Coal Heavers, and Butchers. Within a few months, ten more unions joined the Central Labor Union.

In December 1886 the process of amalgamating craft unions on a national basis culminated in the founding of the American Federation of Labor. On August 20, 1887 the Federated Trades Council, the successor of the Central Labor Union, was chartered by the AFL.

Grottkau left Milwaukee in 1888 to become an agitator for the eight-hour day, employed by the AFL.

The Trades Council's first few years were marked by a shuffling of forces and switches of leadership. In an attempt to create harmony, the office of president was abolished in 1893 on a motion by Frank J. Weber, then president, and a chairman was elected at each meeting, a practice that lasted through the existence of the Trades Council. The principal conflict was between a group which John Coughlin led and the socialist members. This ended when the Coughlin faction seceded from the council.

The constitution of the Trades Council, adopted in 1893, was drafted by two Socialists, Weber and Frederic Heath, then recording secretary. The constitution declared that political activity was necessary because "the ruling moneyed class" had taken "from the workers all the benefits that strikes...had gained" and included such socialist demands as national ownership of railroads, of telephone and telegraph systems, and of mining and the municipal ownership of public utilities.

On August 5, 1897, less than a month after Branch One of the Social Democracy had been formed in Milwaukee, the Trades Council unanimously adopted a resolution endorsing the party. In January 1898 the council elected five delegates to the party's first city convention. Seven unions also sent delegates--the Blacksmiths, Brewery Workers, Brewery Teamsters, Cigar Makers, Coopers, Hod Carriers, and Joiners. In December 1899 the council elected an executive committee composed entirely of socialists.

Again, in 1900, the Trades Council elected delegates to the city convention of then the Social Democratic Party. Many local unions were also represented, and of the 147 delegates, 67 were trade unionists. All the candidates nominated for public office were union members and were subsequently endorsed by the Trades Council.

Thus did the unions and the party work together in the beginning, and so were they to continue as long as the party engaged in public elections.

The support of the Socialist Party by the Trades Council was never monolithic. It varied according to issues and projects, varied among the delegates, and varied within the unions. Unanimity was often voted, and there were also close votes on many questions. Decisions were made basically on considerations of the interests of the workingman, not of the organizations as such. The views of those interests were, among trade unionists, much the same with nonsocialists and socialists, many of the nonsocialists being sympathizers.

"With the advent of the Socialist Party in Milwaukee, made up largely of union men, both party and unions forged ahead almost hand in hand, although there was the correct tactics under which neither tried to run the other." So wrote Frederic Heath in 1938.

Heath's words appeared in "A Tribute" to Frank Weber in a 40-page printed publication for the 38th annual Socialist state picnic held that year at Barn Grove Park in Milwaukee County. The Sunday of the picnic was the eighty-ninth birthday of Weber who was still living and who contributed a message to the picnic program entitled "Socialism the Only Road to Peace and Plenty".

Mayor Daniel W. Hoan in his address, "Welcome to the Picnic", explained that "Socialists and sympathizers from Milwaukee and throughout the state" were this year celebrating the birthday of "the life-long Socialist, Frank Weber".

I handled the publicity for the picnic. For *The Socialist Call*, the official organ of the Socialist Party, U.S.A., then headquartered in Chicago, I wrote a biographical sketch of Weber which was based in part on a couple of interviews I had with him at his former office in Brisbane Hall. The feature was published August 6, 1938. The three-column boxed head, which included my byline, was, on three lines, "A Tribute to/Comrade Frank J. Weber/69 Years Service to the Labor Movement". In the center of the story was a one-column head cut of Weber. Here is the story.

MILWAUKEE, Wis.--It is only truthful to say that eighty-nine years have bent his back and dimmed his eyes, but the years have not diminished in the slightest degree the flame of rebellion against social and economic injustice that burns bright and clear in the mind and heart of Frank J. Weber.

He must have been born with that flame within him--it burns so steadily today when he inveighs in measured phrases against the dictators of wealth and privilege. It is the born fighter who recalls with a gleeful gleam in his eye the battles and stratagems of past years against

predatory bosses and their stooges. He recalls how he organized the coal miners in West Virginia in 1897 despite eleven court injunctions issued against him.

69 YEARS OF SERVICE

It is this man, whose sixty-nine years of service and achievements in the cause of the workers is one of the most distinguished in American history, who will be the honored guest at the state picnic of the Socialist Party of Wisconsin at Milwaukee on Sunday, August 7.

Frank J. Weber will be eighty-nine years old on the date of the picnic and he states his intention to attend the gathering at Barn Grove park here.

Weber's first political allegiance was to the Greenbackers, then he joined the People's Party. He quit the Populists in 1896 when they supported the demagogue, William Jennings Bryan, and ever since he has been a Socialist. It has long been his custom to drop in at the Milwaukee Socialist Party office in the beginning of January to pay up his dues for a year in advance.

A LEGISLATOR

Elected six times on the Socialist tickets, Weber served a total of 12 years in the assembly of the Wisconsin legislature during which time he was one of the wheel-horses who helped to make Wisconsin the foremost state in the enactment of progressive social and labor legislation. He served in the sessions of 1907, 1909, 1911, 1915, 1923 and 1925.

He wrote the first Workmen's Compensation law presented to the legislature and fought with the aid of other Socialist legislators for its adoption for six years until the law was enacted. He played an important rôle in having enacted pensions for the blind, in setting up the vocational school system, in laying the foundations for the old age pension law, the state labor code, as well as many other measures for the improvement of the lot of the common man.

It was a principle with Weber to refuse to stand for any public office except the legislature, and consequently his political career was confined to the state legislative service. His strict sense of loyalty to the labor movement led him to decline numerous political appointments. He turned down posts offered to him by "Old Bob" La Follette when the latter was governor, and by Gov. Emanuel Philipp.

One of the weaknesses of the American labor movement has been--and is--the fact that many of its leaders have deserted the workers' struggle to take the bait of big-paying jobs in government service or private enterprise.

LOYAL TO LABOR

Weber's loyalty to labor, and the example it set for his successors and associates, has been a significant factor in the constantly increasing strength and progressivism of the Wisconsin labor movement--which is not to deny that Wisconsin has had some leaders who have used the shoulders of the labor movement to climb into lucrative jobs with the bosses.

It was shortly after the end of the Civil War that Weber joined the ranks of organized labor. He became a sailor, and working on the old clipper ships, he visited all the important seaports of the world. He sailed on the Great Lakes, too, and at various times captained ships on the Lakes. He learned and worked at the carpenters' trade. He was a schoolmaster, although he had never had a complete common school education.

For twenty years Weber was active in the old Knights of Labor, joining that organization when members were passed upon by committees of Unknown Knights, and leaving it in 1889 to throw his lot with the then up-and-coming American Federation of Labor. In 1891 Weber organized the brewery workers in Milwaukee on an industrial basis. This group has included a large and important number of the city's workers both before and after the prohibition era.

Weber founded the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor in 1893 and served as an officer of the organization for twenty-four years....

Now in the twilight of his days, Frank J. Weber looks back upon a life's work well done. His job was tough, the obstacles many--in his organizing days his footsteps were dogged by thugs and sluggers; he used to travel by freight car and by walking. His accomplishments were many and noteworthy. And they will not soon be forgotten!

A word here about the word "organize" and its derivatives: It is of the vocabulary of the labor movement--of the trade unions (cf. organized labor) and the socialists. Understanding this and something of the use of words will help the reader to clarify this history.

Weber was elected president of the State Federation at its first convention in 1893. At the second convention the next year, the position

of "general organizer" was substituted for that of president, and Weber was elected to the new position and held that office until 1917 when he declined to stand for re-election. Weber was also chairman of the Federation's legislative committee from its inception in 1893 until 1920.

At the first state convention of the Social Democratic Party in 1898, Victor Berger was elected "organizer". No such office existed in any of the other political parties.

Frank Joseph Weber was born in the city of Milwaukee on August 7, 1849. When he was three years old, his parents moved to Grafton in Ozaukee County. He became a schoolmaster in the lake-shore town of Ulao, south of Port Washington, a town long since vanished. He joined the Seafarers' Union on September 5, 1868 upon completion of his apprenticeship and attainment of the rank of able seaman. That was the beginning of a record of more than seventy-four years as a member of organized labor.

Sailor Weber climbed the ladder to the rank of captain on the Great Lakes. He was then twenty-three. Then he began sailing the high seas. When he quit sailing, he became a shipwright in Milwaukee. He was active in the movement for the eight-hour day and helped organize the Carpenters' Union; he was a charter member of Carpenters Local 1053.

The establishing of the American Federation of Labor, concomitantly with industrial development, facilitated the growth of local unions in the state, and these combined in city central bodies. At the same time, the need for laws protecting workers increased along with the perception that cooperation among the unions was necessary to get such laws. The movement for a state organization to bring this about was started and developed under the leadership of Frank Weber. Acting as secretary of the Milwaukee Federated Trades Council, he sent an invitation to all the labor unions in the state to attend a meeting for this purpose.

The meeting was held on June 6, 1893 in Fraternity Hall on Oneida Street (now East Wells) in Milwaukee and was attended by representatives of unions in Racine, Madison, Oshkosh, Marinette, Ashland, West Superior, as well as Milwaukee. They agreed to apply to the AFL for a charter for a state organization. A charter under date of August 14, 1893 was issued for the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor, the fifth state federation to be chartered by the AFL.

On his birthday in the year the state federation was started, Weber rode a boxcar to some towns to urge the unions to affiliate. In the beginning days expense funds for travel were limited. Weber used to tell, "I traveled by side door Pullman and by leg-o-mobile. The only way I could get from Milwaukee to Superior was by box car but from West Bend to Horicon, say, was easy by shanks' mare."

So he organized. And the second annual convention of the WSFL held in Oshkosh in 1894 was attended by nearly a hundred delegates.

Weber was also a general organizer for the American Federation of Labor. In July 1897 he was assigned by President Samuel Gompers to help the United Mine Workers in a strike of coal miners in West Virginia. The winning of the bituminous strike, according to AFL historian Philip Taft, "was of tremendous importance not only for the establishment of the United Mine Workers of America as an effective organization but as a demonstration of the new collective bargaining by unions."

Weber was general secretary of the Milwaukee Federated Trades Council from 1900 to 1934. He was elected as a Socialist to six terms in the assembly of the Wisconsin legislature for the sessions that began in the years 1907, 1909, 1911, 1915, 1923, and 1925.

In the days when skill in public speaking was a standard qualification for leaders, Weber was remarkably endowed. He was a writer, too. He was articulate. And eloquent when befitting. When he was in his eighties, this author met him a few times and interviewed him once for the weekly *Socialist Call*.⁵ My memory is of the cadences of balanced sentences in his conversation.

In his own time and to this day, Frank J. Weber had become the Grand Old Man of Wisconsin Labor.

Frederick Carl Brockhausen, a Dane who had been one of the "Sozialistischer" in Victor Berger's *Vereinigung*, was a close associate of Frank Weber in organizing the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor. Brockhausen was elected secretary-treasurer of the Federation in 1900 and served until 1912 when he retired to enter business. He was one of the five Socialists first elected to the legislature in 1904 and served four consecutive terms in the assembly, through the 1911 legislative session which enacted the most comprehensive program of labor and social laws in the state's history.

Brockhausen was the legislative representative of the WSFL. He was one of the first labor leaders to recognize the need for a law assuring injured workers specific compensation as a statutory right so that they would not have to file suits for damages in the courts. In 1903 he advocated such a law in his report to the Manitowoc convention. In the years that followed, he worked persistently with Frank Weber for a workmen's compensation law and shares equal credit for its passage by the 1911 session in which both were assemblymen.

Brockhausen was born in Fredericia, a seaport of Denmark, on May 20, 1858. He learned the trade of cigar making in the old country, and was a unionist there. He came to the United States at the age of twenty-one and settled in Milwaukee in the 1880's.

Besides his official activities noted here, Brockhausen, from the time of his arrival in Milwaukee, functioned in union and political organizations, was elected to conventions of both--city, state, and national--and to the state central committee of the Social Democratic

Party. Like so many others, but conspicuously, he exemplified the socialist as a political activist and a unionist. He died in Milwaukee in 1932.

When the party won the election in 1910 to govern the city of Milwaukee, two Socialists who were to become the immediate successors of Weber and Brockhausen were appointed to important administrative positions. Henry Ohl, Jr., a union printer, who was named deputy city clerk, was elected president and general organizer of the State Federation of Labor in 1917. John J. Handley, a union machinist, who became superintendent of the bureau of street cleaning and sanitation, was elected secretary-treasurer of the Federation in 1912. A view here at the roles performed in it by Ohl and Handley should dispel any notion that they were mere officeholders.

Ohl was appointed by Carl D. Thompson immediately after the Social-Democratic city council had elected Thompson the city clerk. Thompson, a Congregational minister, was to become an influential figure in state and national affairs of the party and as a propagandist for public ownership of public utilities.

The "complete reorganization" of the city clerk's department was described in the *Municipal Campaign Book*, published in 1912 by the party's county central committee. Details of the work of the department were "in most cases revolutionized" to institute "modern, up-to-date methods" to effect economies, the booklet recounted, and showed a table of savings that totaled \$23,732, no mean sum in those days.

The bureau of street sanitation was responsible for street cleaning, sprinkling and oiling, also collection of ashes and garbage, and direct management of the incinerator plant, all the city dumps, and all the ward employees in the city. The *Campaign Book* recorded that "John J. Handley, one of the best known and most capable trade unionists of the city, was put in charge of this work."

Under Handley's direction, improved methods were introduced in doing all the work, but "the most important improvement in the street cleaning department was the introduction of the modern power street flushing machines. This work was formerly done with a fire hose." With the new machines, the flushing cost was reduced from 69 cents per thousand square yards to 15 cents.

Henry Ohl, Jr., was born in Milwaukee on March 16, 1873. An active member of the Socialist Party from the turn of the century, he joined Typographical Union No. 23 in 1901 at the age of twenty-eight. After the nonpartisans won control of the Milwaukee administration, Ohl busied himself in trade union work, became an organizer for the American Federation of Labor and the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor, and was elected to the executive board of the State Federation. In 1916 he was elected on the Socialist ticket to the assembly for the Milwaukee district comprised of the 20th and 22nd Wards. As a printer, Henry Ohl developed "an occupational sense" for

the use of words which through the years he refined in his writings and speeches for clarity and eloquence.

He devoted special effort throughout his life toward opening up new educational opportunities for workers, being motivated in part, we may assume, by the fact that he had to quit school to go to work at the age of eleven. Wisconsin was a lone pioneer in the field of workers' education in America for the first several decades of this century. The School for Workers of the University of Wisconsin, originated in 1925, was the only one of its kind for twenty-one years until Harvard College started a Trade Union Fellowship Project. The principal factors in the development of organized workers' education in Wisconsin were the state university and the labor movement. And the drive in the latter was socialist in conception and essence and was led and pushed by people like Ohl who were Socialists.

Workers' Education: A Wisconsin Experiment, a book by Ernest E. Schwartztrauber, was published by the University of Wisconsin Press in 1942. The author, who was director of the School for Workers at the time, had been a teacher and administrator in Wisconsin workers' education since 1930. He said the philosophy of the socialist movement "made itself felt in the Milwaukee organized labor movement and through it, in the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor".

Schwartztrauber quoted Henry Ohl in the 1926 edition of the State Federation's yearbook, *Wisconsin Labor*, urging affiliated unions to set up "labor colleges". Ohl had written, "The purpose of the Labor College is to afford the worker the opportunity to study labor history, to know our economic structure as it is, whence it came and what it might be and should be in time to come."

Schwartztrauber commented:

This is an admonition to workers to think in terms of a changing economic system. It does not emphasize merely the immediate, individualistic problem of job control, although that, too, is given constant attention in workers' education programs. Workers' education is considered an instrument for attaining the goals of tomorrow as well as those of today, and this attitude stems from a conception that organized labor has a collective reconstruction job ahead, as well as an immediate one concerned with bread-and-butter matters. It is part of the pattern which a socialist philosophy weaves into its long-range program.

Victor Berger introduced a resolution to the 1905 convention of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor that is "the first recorded official reference to the desirability of a workers' education program in the state," according to Schwartztrauber. Berger chaired the convention's committee on education.

The resolution, which was adopted, recommended "that suitable lectures be arranged in the meeting hall or the lodge room from time to time. Whenever advisable they may be connected with an entertainment and the ladies and grown-up children shall be specially invited to attend."

Political action monopolized the time of the Socialists in the party and the unions for the next decade or so. Then came the problems brought on by what was then the unnumbered World War. After the war, in the winter of 1921-22, workers' education was for the first time transformed from a concept into a reality, as the Federated Trades Council founded the Milwaukee Workers College.

The Trades Council elected a board of trustees of nine members to which were to be added six more--three representing the teachers and three representing the students. The Trades Council trustees included Ohl, Handley, Jacob F. Friedrich, William Coleman, Edward H. Kiefer, Frank B. Metcalfe, and James P. Sheehan--all Socialists. The first classes were held in the evening in the city hall's civil service rooms provided without charge.

Then Henry Ohl began organizing. Traveling from town to town, he addressed union meetings on the value, need, and benefits of forming labor classes. By 1927-28, 17 such classes had been organized in 12 cities of the state. Ohl's promotion of workers' education was a prime factor in establishing the university's School for Workers. His devotion to vocational education was recognized by President Franklin Roosevelt who appointed him to the Federal Board of Vocational Education.

As head of the State Federation of Labor, Henry Ohl was very active in all phases of union organizing, education, and legislative work until his death in Milwaukee in 1940.

John Joseph Handley, universally called Jack, was born in Horicon, Wisconsin on August 5, 1876. He learned the machinist trade there at the Van Brunt Manufacturing Company plant. When he had completed his apprenticeship, as a journeyman he went to Rockford, Illinois where he joined the International Association of Machinists in August 1899. The next year he moved to Milwaukee, transferring his membership to Local Lodge No. 66.

In 1905 Handley was elected business agent of Machinists District Lodge 10. He served in that position until his appointment to the department of public works.

It is worth noting here that the Machinists Association was a socialist union, to put it concisely, not only in Milwaukee but also in many other cities. Nationally, Socialists were elected to the office of international president and to other top offices of the Machinists during those years of the party's vitality. At the international

convention in Milwaukee in 1903, the Socialists succeeded in changing the preamble of the constitution--to stress the class struggle and to call for the restoration of control of the government to the people and for the exploitation of the national resources in behalf of the common welfare.

In Minneapolis in 1916 Thomas Van Lear, a socialist, who had been the business agent of the Machinists union for a score of years, was elected mayor.

My father was a union machinist and a socialist--in Sweden where he learned his craft. He came to America in 1902 at the age of twenty-five and settled in Milwaukee in 1907. In 1968 at the annual picnic of the Socialist Party of Wisconsin, I met Elmer Libert, an acquaintance in the late '30's. He had been a machinist, a grand lodge representative of the union, a Socialist, and a Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation candidate for alderman. At the picnic, he told me and a small group of oldtimers that he had worked as an apprentice with my father in the West Milwaukee railroad shops in 1910 and had listened to him talking socialism, and that was how Libert became a socialist. Libert was a native-born American citizen of German descent and a Roman Catholic; my father was foreign-born and a Lutheran.

As secretary-treasurer of the State Federation, Jack Handley, like Brockhausen, was the legislative representative whose job it was to appear before committees of the legislature to promote the interests of the workers.

The Workmen's Compensation Act had just been passed when Handley took office, and the equally difficult task followed of enforcing it and improving it in the succeeding sessions of the legislature. Handley worked continuously with the industrial commission on problems of administration and with the legislature on amendments. And at session after session, the law was strengthened.

There were other laws in which the Federation was interested, of course, and Handley familiarized himself with all of them. Soon the opinion was widespread that he was the man best posted on labor legislation in the state.

Jack Handley died on October 17, 1941, a year and a day after the death of Henry Ohl, his lifetime associate.

While the sketches here are only of some of the top leaders, all Socialists were in fact contributing to the development of the Wisconsin labor movement. And there were, of course, other leaders in the labor movement then and through the years, who were also Socialists. Equally important, there were from the beginning the members, the rank-and-filers, with whom the leaders on all echelons interacted and for whose interests they worked. The lives and deeds of other Socialist unionists will also be recounted as this narrative proceeds.

Now there is a personal history that I believe is felicitously appropriate here. It is the story of a second echelon leader. I knew the man personally and wrote about him in other works. He was Emil Brodde.

Brodde died on January 22, 1966 at the age of eighty-nine. He had represented the 20th Ward of Milwaukee on the county board of supervisors from 1924 to 1940. He had been a member of the Socialist Party since 1904 until his death. He was secretary-treasurer of the party in Milwaukee County for many years. Also, for many years, he was president of the cooperative savings bank, the Commonwealth Mutual.

In the Labor Day edition of the *Milwaukee Evening Post*, an off-spring of *The Milwaukee Leader*, on August 30, 1940, under my byline appeared the following:

A single fact about a man can be tremendously revealing.

For example, the conscientious man, attentive to detail, the loyal man--and the healthy man--who is Emil Brodde, is revealed in this fact:

Emil Brodde has been a delegate to the Milwaukee Federated Trades council since 1898 and has never been absent from or late to a meeting.

The Trades council meets twice a month, 24 times a year. Multiplied by 42 years, that makes 1,008 meetings that Emil has attended without a miss.

And the healthy man? Well, that is explained when he answers your question about his attendance record:

"Ye--es, it's true. But you see, I never was sick."

Treasurer Since '09

The oldest officer in point of service of the Trades council, Emil has been financial secretary-treasurer continuously since January, 1909--31 years and eight months--and served for a number of years as a member of the executive board and as recording secretary.

But for his own vote, he might have been financial secretary since 1900. In the election for the office that year he lost by one vote when he voted for his opponent. Had he been elected then, very likely he would have continued to hold the job, for he has attended his duties so well that he has only been opposed on two occasions since 1909.

A Bare Handful

Just turned 21, Emil attended his first Trades council meeting as a delegate of the old Woodworkers' union No. 8, which later became Carpenters' union, local No. 1053--the Cabinet Makers' and Millmen's local. To that first meeting, Emil bounded up the narrow, rickety stairs to the third floor hall on the northwest corner of Sixth and Chestnut (now W. Juneau) where less than 100 delegates, representing less than 10,000 unionists, met under the gas lights.

He found the stairs easy because he was a slim fellow, weighing 130 pounds, although only five feet four. But he did not look like a journeyman who had attained his majority. So in order to look like a full-fledged journeyman and make it easier to get work, he grew a mustache. The mustache he has kept, but not the color of it.

Council Moved Around

The history of the Trades council can be told in terms of its meeting places. Emil will tell you how the council moved from Sixth and Chestnut to Third and Prairie (now W. Highland); then to the old Freie Gemeinde hall on Fourth, between State and Cedar (now W. Kilbourn); then to Brisbane hall; and, finally, about four years ago, to the Eagles' aerie room.

When the council met at the Freie Gemeinde, Emil recalls, with a smile, that after the meetings long discussions on labor problems and politics and Socialism would be held over beer and free lunch at Heumann's bottle house, Bob Buech's or Urbanek and Harbicht's saloons, all located near Third and State. "Chewing the rag" on these occasions would be Victor Berger, Frank Weber, Fred Brockhausen and a couple of young delegates named Henry Ohl and Jack Handley.

Beer and Pancakes

When the council met at Brisbane hall, the same gang used to go across the street to Billy Coleman's saloon for potato pancakes and beer.

Emil has served as recording secretary and financial secretary of 1053. At present, he is its assistant financial secretary. He was secretary of the Carpenters' District council for 10 years, off and on. He was a delegate to several conventions of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor and of the Carpenters' international.

Brisbane House Carpenter

He built the many shelves and cabinets in the Socialist party office at Brisbane hall when Emil Seidel was party secretary around 1916.

"You might say I was the house carpenter at Brisbane hall," Emil says.

The painstaking care with which Emil joined those shelves is told by Frank Zeidler, present Socialist secretary. Frank relates:

"They were so perfectly dovetailed and so securely glued and nailed, we could hardly get them apart."

Courthouse Expert

Emil learned his trade building saloon fixtures which used to be a big business in this city. Then he made fixtures for stores and soda fountains. His knowledge of marble gained from his soda fountain experience and his lore of woodworking stood him in good stead as a member of the building committee of the county board. Being the only one with building experience on the board, his advise (*sic*) was often asked for by the tailor, cigarmaker, and tradesmen, supervisors during the construction of the safety building and the courthouse.

As well recognized is Emil's ability to keep an efficient and honest set of books. Besides his long record as financial secretary-treasurer of the Trades council, Emil is the perennial treasurer of the Labor day picnic--and then he will tell you:

Labor Day Picnics

"Years ago the picnics were held at Pabst park, now Garfield park. We used to have parades in those days, starting at 10:30 in the morning. We would march from Sixth and Chestnut up Third st. to the park. All the bands in the city were engaged for the day, and everybody who had a horn played. And the horseshoers wore their leather aprons and black caps; the painters came in white shirts and white caps, and the brewery workers rode on horseback. Everybody was in it with badges and banners."

He Likes to Fish

You ask the man who has devoted his life to the labor movement, who has given most of his evenings and Saturdays and Sundays to meetings, keeping books, receiving dues and what not:

"What do you do for recreation, Emil?"

"Well, I like to go auto riding and fishing, but--"

And you understand--that the man who hasn't missed a Trades council session in 42 years would not have much time for play.

Well, may the little man with the miniature carpenter's saw on his old-fashioned watch chain, read the receipts and disbursements for many, many meetings to come!

He has gotten to like the job!

Now some bibliographic notes about certain histories of the labor movement in Wisconsin during its early years, and now, too, some words about words and phrases--"labor movement", "interlocking directorate", "infiltrate", and "personal union" or "symbiosis"--as these terms are used in the histories.

The relationships between the Socialist Party and the unions--the association, the connection, the partnership, the coalition, the alliance, the friendship--have been noted, described, discussed from the first days through the first decades in and out of the labor movement until now by certain Wisconsin historians. The totality of these relationships has traditionally been identified as "the labor movement". We should clarify the concept. The phrase, "the labor movement", had a different meaning through those first decades in America from that of today. Then, the political party was part of the labor movement--as it still is in the lands where the Socialists have continued active and grown strong, in Britain, West Germany, the Scandinavian countries. In the United States today, "the labor movement" is more restrictively synonymous with "organized labor"--the unions.

Scholarly histories of the Socialist Party in Milwaukee are very few and of the party in Wisconsin, nonexistent. Yet the Socialist Party had from the beginning been a significant, bold, and aggressive party of the labor movement in Wisconsin. Unfortunately, published accounts of this historical movement are few and now rare.

Marvin Wachman's monograph, *History of the Social Democratic Party of Milwaukee, 1897-1910*, published in 1945, is an excellent study, factual and perceptive. And those felicitous adjectives apply as well to Wachman's detailing of the relationship between the party and the unions. Early in his account, he observed "...the labor movement in Milwaukee...was intimately associated with the growth of the socialist party." Wachman found that in the period of his study the memberships of the trade unions and the party "overlapped to a large degree, and by 1910, the result for which the Socialists had been striving--to make their party the political arm of the trade-union movement--had surely

been reached...it is noteworthy that most of the same men who guided the affairs of the unions also guided the affairs of the Social Democratic party of Milwaukee and Wisconsin."

In his exposition, Wachman included the simile, "A kind of 'interlocking directorate' existed between the two movements."⁶ The simile, in the *modus operandi* of some research and writing, was later adopted as a metaphor, and then, after some repetition, has almost become generally accepted as descriptive of the relationship. Frederick I. Olson, in his unpublished Ph.D. thesis, dated 1952, entitled, "The Milwaukee Socialists, 1897-1941", wrote, "The party...exercised its influence through a common leadership, an 'interlocking directorate'..." In a published article in *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Winter, 1960-1961, entitled, "The Socialist Party and the Unions in Milwaukee", Olson wrote, "Socialist strength in the unions...represented by the interlocking directorate and a fairly broad common membership provided the party with endorsements and campaign donations..."

The term, "interlocking directorate", is of the capitalist glossary. It is defined, "a corporate directorate one or more of whose members serve simultaneously in the directorate of another corporation or other corporations."

To use a big business denotative phrase in a connotative description of working-class organizations is certainly more than just somewhat *malapropos*.

In another place in his Ph.D. thesis, Olson wrote, "The Milwaukee socialists..determined to infiltrate and, if possible, to control in some degree every local and state affiliate of the Federation, in order to further the interests of the Social Democratic party and its political activities." A dictionary example sentence in definition of "infiltrate" is, "The troops infiltrated the enemy lines." The idea of "infiltration" is no more appropriate in the application to the Socialists than is the term "interlocking directorate".

A contemporary and more accurate delineation and academic understanding of the relationship between the Socialist Party and the unions is that of "symbiosis" as expressed in two books published by The State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The first in 1968 was written by Herbert F. Margulies and the other, in 1973, was by Robert C. Nesbit.

Margulies wrote, "Under the leadership of the forceful immigrant intellectual, Victor Berger, a close, symbiotic relationship had been established between the Social Democrats and the trade unionists of Milwaukee."⁷

Nesbit wrote, "The local success of Victor Berger's Socialist party, in a symbiotic relationship with organized labor, created a strong labor influence..."⁸

"Symbiosis", from which the status symbol adjective is derived, is a borrowing from biology and has this one definition: "the living together of two dissimilar organisms, esp. when this association is mutually beneficial."

History deals with people. People made up the Socialist Party and the unions--the organizations. These people were the focus of this chapter. They, their activities, and the events that affected them will be described and examined throughout this history.

Victor Berger talked and wrote about the political party and the unions countless times--as did a good many others. But what may be called his classic statement was an editorial of a thousand words he wrote in *The Social Democratic Herald* of December 2, 1905, which is included in the book, *Voice and Pen of Victor L. Berger*. It was headed, "Labor Learns in the School of Experience". Here is the conclusion and summation of the statement:

...we say that we must have a two-armed labor movement--a labor movement with a political arm and with an economic arm. Each arm has its own work to do, and one arm ought not to interfere with the other, although they are parts of the same body. That is the "Milwaukee idea". In the personal union of the workers of both, that is, in having the same persons take an active interest in both the trade union and the political labor movement, we find the strongest connecting link between the Social-Democratic party and the trade union organization. This idea works successfully not only in Milwaukee, but everywhere wherever the true relationship between trade unionism and Socialism is rightly understood. Then we find the same men, with the same thoughts, aims and ideals working in the economic and the political field, thus forming a grand army moving on two roads for the abolition of the capitalist system.⁹

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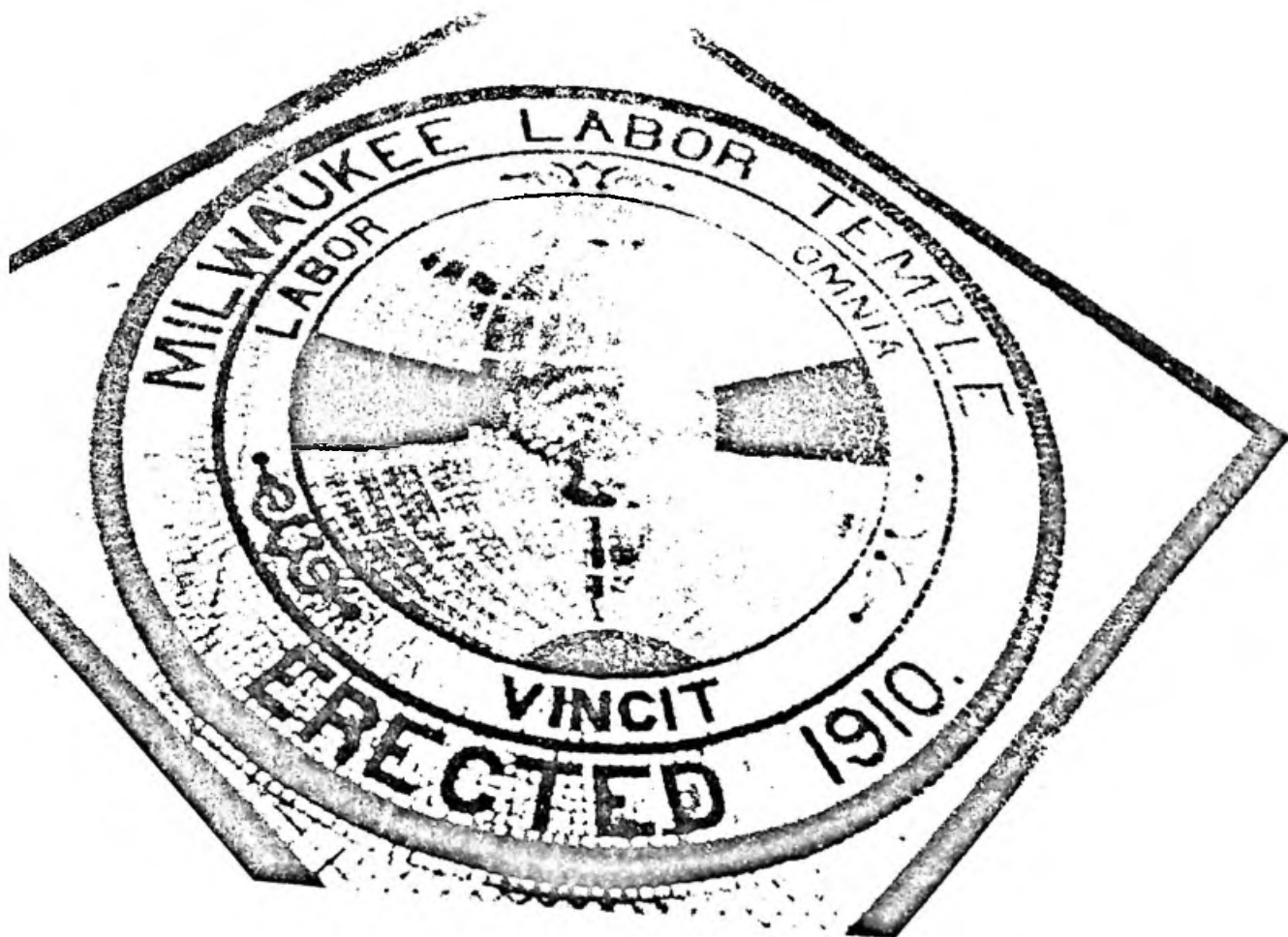
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CHAPTER IV

DEMOCRATIC BOODLERS AND REPUBLICAN CROOKS

Like a morality play, a sequence of actions in Milwaukee during the crescendo years of the Socialist Party dramatized the wrongdoings of the Democratic and Republican politicians in the city and county governments and built up the Socialists as the personificators of justice.

In the complex of factors that brought election gains to the Socialist Party, which included the zeal of the members and the support of the wageworkers, a most important element was the widespread appeal of their candidates as champions of political morality.

The desire for clean government which generated votes for the Socialists in all their campaigns can be traced back, in part, to the Milwaukee Germans in the

1870's when they took an active stand against corruption in national and local politics...in 1875...they proposed a vigilance committee to "establish surveillance" of the several departments of the city government; and in 1876 mass meetings, "crowded by workingmen and citizens of all classes," spoke out against "municipal rings."¹

A principal source of corruption was the advent of the street railway, starting with the horsecar and then flourishing with the electric trolley. This happened in Milwaukee as it did in cities throughout the land.

The first horse railroad in Milwaukee began operating in 1860 on tracks from the present North Water Street bridge to East Juneau Avenue. The public utility was privately owned by the newly incorporated River and Lake Shore City Railroad Company.

The Milwaukee enterprise had been preceded by similar utilities in Chicago, St. Louis, and other cities. Boston's first street railway started in 1852. From the very beginning, public transportation was a gold mine for investors. The original horsecar company in Milwaukee was immediately profitable and led to the formation of additional horse railroads.

As the city limits extended and the population increased, the transportation business expanded and evolved by 1882 into monopoly control by three companies operating in their own territories. The companies were the Milwaukee City Railway Company, the West Side Street

Railway Company, and the Cream City Railway Company. The latter was controlled by Washington Becker, a magnate whose money in 1906 helped elect his son, Sherburn M. Becker, then twenty-nine years of age, mayor of Milwaukee. The Beckers were Republicans.

The centripetal tendency in the evolution of the street railways--in the disappearance of competition with the consolidating of companies into monopoly ownership concomitant with the growth of business--continued in Milwaukee as it did everywhere else.

The three horse railways in the middle eighties together owned 610 horses and employed 200 men in the operation of 33 miles of track. As the business boomed, big news buzzed in 1887 that a streetcar propelled by electricity transmitted through a trolley from an overhead wire had gone into service in Richmond, Virginia. Then big capital in New York went west fast for investment outlets and diverged into Milwaukee.

By the turn of the nineties, Walter G. Oakman of New York had become president of the Milwaukee City Railroad Company, and Henry Villard² of New York had acquired controlling holdings in the Milwaukee street railway system.

The Republican Party leader of Wisconsin, Henry Clay Payne, had induced Villard to enter his New York corporation, the North American Company, in the Milwaukee financial arena. The historian, Bayrd Still, recounted:

In December 1890, Villard and his associates gained control of and merged the Cream City and the Milwaukee City railway companies to form the Milwaukee Street Railway Company. Of this, Villard became president and Payne, vice president. On September 29, 1891, the stock of the West Side Street Railway Company was transferred to the North American in the interest of the Milwaukee Street Railway Company; and by January 29, 1894, this company had absorbed all the strictly city transit lines, as well as the Badger Illuminating Company and the Edison Electric Illuminating Company.

Payne served as president from 1892 to 1895. In the latter year, the Central Trust Company of New York, to whom the property had been mortgaged in January 1894, foreclosed; and Payne and George R. Sheldon were appointed as receivers.³

From the financial tangle, Payne, then chairman of the Republican state central committee, and E. C. Wall, chairman of the Democratic state central committee, engineered the consolidation of the Milwaukee Electric Street Railway and Light Company. The job was done on January 29, 1896. While William M. Cromwell of New York became president, Payne was made vice president and manager of the street railway department and Wall, manager of the light department.

The next year John I. Beggs, a power plant expert in New York, was engaged to make a survey of the Milwaukee street railway system. He remained to become in 1902 the general manager of the company who directed the expenditure of \$23 million for the extension of its facilities to the suburbs and for the acquisition of other lines. He became president of the company, retired from the position in 1911, and resumed it again in 1920 until his death in 1925. "It was said that Beggs probably was the richest man in Wisconsin and that his estate was estimated at \$40,000,000 to \$50,000,000," according to Edward S. Kerstein, reporter for *The Milwaukee Journal*, in his biography of Daniel Hoan.⁴

The Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company personified Vice in the morality play in which the Socialists and trade unionists were Good Angels. For thirty-eight years, from the time of its formation, the privately owned public utility which held monopoly ownership and control of the transportation and electric power in metropolitan Milwaukee was the arch enemy of the people. The company was the antagonist in the two most bitter strikes in the city's history.

The first strike broke out a few months after the formation of the company in 1896. The employees, numbering 700 and members of Division 15 of the Amalgamated Association of Street Railway Employees, walked out when Vice President Payne, the local headman of the company, refused to bargain with the union. The workers were asking a 1-cent increase in the wage of 19 cents an hour which they were receiving.

The company brought in hundreds of out-of-town strikebreakers, and the people reacted by throwing stones at streetcars and eggs at passengers, shooting one motorman, and crowding in protest meetings and by a mass boycott in which grocers and butchers refused to sell to anyone connected with the company. The strike became national news. Samuel Gompers called it "a strike without parallel in the labor world". It lasted a month. The workers lost, and their union was destroyed.

Hatred for the company, focused in the beginning on Payne, persisted through the years until the second strike which was a three-day war in 1934. This one the workers won. The settlement met their demands and recognized their unions, including the Amalgamated Association of Street Railway Employees.

"A revolution in city life came with the first cheap public transportation", said Daniel J. Boorstin in his book, *The Americans: The Democratic Experience*. This revolution, that occurred in many places about the same time, brought about the rapid growth of the downtowns with the flourishing of big department stores.

It seems appropriate here to pause upon the word "revolution". Revolution it was indeed--radical and thorough and pervasive, nonetheless so that it was nonideological and devoid of central planning or masterminding. It was technological in its origins and explosions.

The dominance of the privately owned public utility was a product of the revolution.

The term *cheap* public transportation is descriptive of the contrast between the street railways and the omnibuses which were pulled by horses over cobblestones and mud. But neither the horse railroad nor the trolley car were cheap for the working people.

As stated previously, the employees of the street railway company in Milwaukee were getting 19 cents an hour in wages when they struck for a penny more in 1896. The trolley-car fare was five cents. The fare had been a nickel on the horsecars, too. Other wage rates for Milwaukee workers in the same period ranged from 12 to 30 cents an hour. Average hourly earnings in the nation (farm labor excluded) were 21 cents in 1890, 23 cents in 1900, 29 cents in 1910.⁵

Most of the workers walked to work. The family walked on Sunday to church in the morning and to the park in the afternoon. The workers had to find homes within walking distance of their jobs or jobs close to their homes.

Of course, there were many who had to take the streetcar to work, those who had jobs downtown, for example. Many families, too, would ride the trolleys on Sundays and holidays to visit relatives and friends and have fun.

The horseless carriage in those days belonged to the well-to-do. The age of the automobile did not begin until the 1920's along with the sophisticated buying on the installment plan.

The Socialists fought for lower fares, and they fought for municipal ownership of the street railway utility *pro bono publico* that would have provided public transportation less expensive than that sold by the company. The objectives of fare reduction and public ownership were both popularly supported.¹ Nevertheless, the alliance of the company, the judiciary, and the Democratic and Republican politicians defeated in protracted battles the Socialists and their objectives.

The first effort to shave the five cent fare was in June 1896 when the city council enacted an ordinance requiring the company to sell tickets at the rate of six for a quarter and 25 for a dollar. Injunctions to invalidate the ordinance sought by the company and the Central Trust Company of New York were upheld by the federal court of the eastern district of Wisconsin on the grounds that the legislated rates were unreasonable.

Continued efforts to get the fare reduced to four cents came to a permanent halt at the beginning of the year 1900 when an ordinance was passed granting the company a thirty-five year monopoly franchise and victory on the issue of the five cent fare.⁶

Before the socialists had formed their own party, they supported the Populist Party candidate for mayor, Henry Smith, in 1896. Under the leadership of Victor Berger, they successfully included in the

Populist platform a demand for city ownership of streetcar lines, electric light plants, and public utilities. Smith ran a strong race, receiving 9,121 votes, but a Republican won that election.

The next election in 1898, in which the Social Democracy made its first appearance in politics, was won by the Democratic candidate, David Stuart Rose. The Democratic platform was baited for votes from the former Populists with a declaration for municipal ownership of public utilities and a condemnation of the Republican Party as "the tool of the street car monopoly" and "the garbage ring". As the candidate of the "Popocrats", Rose orated on the side of the "poor workingman". The retiring city council that year voted unanimously for a municipally owned garbage plant.

As soon as Rose took office, he turned around on the municipal ownership issue. He began working with the organized efforts of the aldermen who backed the streetcar company and who sponsored a city ordinance that would give the company all the monopoly privileges it sought, including gifts of streets and bridges, immunity from having to pave between the tracks, and the five cent fare.

For practically the whole two-year term of the Rose administration, vehement controversy raged between the proponents and opponents of the streetcar company. The opponents included the Municipal League which had been organized in 1895 when Milwaukee citizens responded to a national wave for municipal reform and joined the National Municipal League which had been formed that year. In 1898 the Municipal League issued 14,000 bulletins demanding that any franchise extension include besides original payment an annual division of the company profits with the city, inspection of its books, and reduction of the fare to four cent

In the summer of 1899 negotiations between representatives of the city and the company, whose bargainers included Villard, Cromwell, Payne, Beggs, and Charles F. Pfister, led to the preparation of a "compromise" ordinance that gave small comfort to the municipal reformers. Still's history recounts:

The company conceded passes to policemen, firemen and health officers; consented to furnish the city with electric power to operate its draw bridges...it was understood that the railway company was to pave...between the tracks. In return for these concessions the company gained a substantial victory on the 5-cent fare...it was protected in a fare not to exceed 5 cents as well as in the other privileges of its franchises, until December 31, 1934....

Strong protests came from members of the Municipal League, from proponents of municipal ownership, and from affected lot owners. At a mass meeting of business and workingmen held at the West Side Turn Hall on December 15 it was asserted that...the proposed ordinance...would "prevent competition and make lower fares in the future

impossible." In spite of outspoken opposition, Mayor Rose...and a majority of his council proceeded in great haste to pass the ordinance. They refused to listen to suggestions that action await the decision of the citizens in the approaching election; and in the council meeting of December 18, all efforts to amend the ordinance to meet popular demands were summarily quashed by a vote of 25 to 17.⁷

Final action on the ordinance was taken on January 2, 1900 at a council meeting closed to the public at which Mayor Rose was on hand to sign the ordinance as soon as it was passed for fear that some manifestation of popular indignation might prevent delivery of the goods to the Payne-Pfister crowd who stood in waiting to receive them.⁸

We can better understand what went on in Milwaukee by looking at what was going on in the nation. By the end of the nineteenth century, municipal corruption had become a national scandal in the United States. But the corruption and social abuse were not confined to the cities, for they were rampant at every level of government from the federal to the precinct and village. It was a plague that brought about consequent exposure in a new era of journalism, the era of muckraking.

The term "muckraking", first applied by President Theodore Roosevelt to the exposure movement, was intended as a public rebuke. The word caught on, not in the connotation intended, but as a good word describing good work that had won popular approval. Distinguished in the apostolic succession of muckrakers are the names of Henry Demarest Lloyd, Roy Stannard Baker, Ida Tarbell, Gustavus Myers, David Graham Phillips, Upton Sinclair, and Lincoln Steffens.

Steffens wrote *The Shame of the Cities*, a book which had brought together six articles that *McClure's Magazine* had published exposing corruption in the municipal governments of St. Louis, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York. The first of these articles, on St. Louis, had appeared in the issue of October 1902. In that article Steffens defined "boodling" as a form of corruption that "involves, not thieves, gamblers, and common women, but influential citizens, capitalists, and great corporations. For the stock in trade of the boodler is the rights, privileges, franchises, and real property of the city, and its source of corruption is the top, not the bottom of society." Typical of Steffens' findings was this from a grand jury report in St. Louis:

Our investigation, covering more or less fully a period of ten years, shows that, with few exceptions, no ordinance has been passed wherein valuable privileges or franchises were granted until those interested have paid the legislators the money demanded for action in the particular case.

Steffens wrote concerning St. Louis, "In 1898, 1899 and 1900 under the administration of Mayor Ziegenheim, boodling developed into the only

real business of the city government." He continued, "The city grew ripe and went to rot" as the mayor called "Uncle Henry" became famous for his reply to some citizens who complained because certain street lights were put out: "You have the moon yet, ain't it?"

While Milwaukee was not covered in Steffens' series of *McClure's* articles, he wrote later of Milwaukee, "It is St. Louis all over again."

Those were the days. The good old days. "This is a wide open town where we feed beer to babies," Dave Rose said.⁹ It was the era when the red-light district flourished on River Street, when city and county officials boodled on everything from franchises to bay window privileges. Those were the days when grand juries, coming and going as inevitably as the seasons, were returning indictments in a continuous stream. Those were the days when a fusion of the old parties controlled the governments, the Democrats, the city, and the Republicans, the county and the state, and between them sharing the loot.

To the bribes of the corporations, the politicians added bribes from contractors, gamblers, saloon keepers, dance-hall proprietors, whorehouse keepers, prostitutes, and pimps. All these with cash in hand were given jobs, licenses, and protection. Graft from houses of prostitution and gambling yielded from \$15,000 to \$20,000 every year to the crooked members of the common council, according to estimates quoted at the time. Those were the days when the saying was "Everything goes under Mayor Rose!" The days were "all-the-time-Rosy"--and the campaign slogan that helped re-elect him and later helped defeat him. Eugene Debs in a speech for the Socialists in 1902 called him "David Roach."

River Street was more than the name of the street along the Milwaukee River, now Edison Street. It was the red-light district from the river east to North Market Street, from East Wells to East Juneau, roughly. The whorehouses catered to every social rank. The cheapest dives were along the river. The ritziest palace, which was on East State Street, had a Louis XIV room with marble baths, a Moorish room, and a Japanese room (making it also the "exoticest" house); this was owned by the queen of the madames, Kitty Williams.

River Street was the Wall Street of commercial vice, but there were sporting houses of all sorts in other parts of town, including gambling casinos, stall-saloons for assignations, and all-night saloons.

The wide-open town was rationalized by the old party politicians as good for business because it brought in conventions and attracted spenders from Chicago and other places.

The Socialists thought otherwise.

The Socialists opposed commercialized prostitution. They opposed it on grounds of morality, ideology, economics, politics, and good

government. It had been flourishing when they founded their party. They opposed it from the very beginning. They opposed it in and between elections, in their platforms, literature and press, in the city council, and in the state legislature. They preached against it and poked fun at it.

Frederic Heath wrote about the goings on in town (that long before Walter Winchell) in *The Social Democratic Herald*, telling stories from the red-light district. Typical would be a paragraph asking who was the "respectable" businessman who heard that the police were coming in the bordello where he was "just having a beer" and jumped out of the window but left his pants behind? Readers of the weekly would chuckle, "Ol' Poison-pen Fred's got another hot story."

It wasn't that the Socialists were strait-laced. They liked fun. Many drank beer and schnaps, played Schafskopf and skat. They met in saloons after branch and county central meetings. They took their families on Sundays to Schlitz Palm Garden and other beer gardens...

What the Socialists opposed was, in their own words, "the white slave traffic, the social evil, under all their (*sic*) forms and methods, with their attendant diseases of the body, their accompaniment of crime and political corruption, and the terrible, monstrous exploitation connected with this devilish trade in the bodies and souls of women." Those words are from the *Social Democratic Vest Pocket Manual, 1912 Fall Campaign*, which carried ten pages of dissertation on the white slave traffic and five pages on prostitution. Of the money involved in the business of prostitution in the days of Rose, the little book stated:

It has been conservatively estimated,

That there were 200 houses of ill-fame in the city, with an average of five active inmates, a total of 1,000 inmates;

That each of these inmates "served" from 15 to 40 men a day, or a minimum average of 15 per day--a total of 15,000 men;

That this represents an average business with 450,000 men per month, or 5,400,000 per year;

That a conservative estimate of the price received is \$1 for each occasion, or a total income of \$5,400,000 per year to the business;

That the rents on these 200 houses would not average less than \$100 a month, a total of \$20,000 monthly, and \$240,000 annually to the landlords alone...

The amount of the liquor trade was enormous, and the prices exorbitant...beer \$1 a bottle for what ordinarily costs 5 or 10 cents.

Those were the days before the Socialists won in 1910.

An incident illustrative of the way the political fusion operated is this from the spring election of 1904. At that time Charlie Pfister had succeeded to the boss position of the Republican department while Mayor Rose was boss of the Democrats. Boodling was the issue of the campaign, highlighted by grand-jury indictments. Against Rose the Republicans put up a "good" man for mayor, young Guy D. Goff, and charged that the Democrats had fastened on the city "the brigade of grafters which now have Milwaukee by the throat". When the returns showed that he was beaten, Goff hunted up Pfister to share commiseration with him over their defeat. Goff found the Republican boss in his hotel, the Pfister, popping champagne corks with Rose who had been re-elected.

Victor Berger was the Social Democratic candidate for mayor in 1904. Rose had gotten Republican votes by the line that a vote for Goff was a vote for Berger and control of the city by the Federated Trades Council. Also he played to the Polish Catholics and their fear of socialism. The graft issue had crested in that campaign against the "Democratic boodlers and the Republican crooks", and the Socialists were confident of winning.

Berger predicted that the voters would "march by the thousands and tens of thousands and give the city of Milwaukee the most thorough socialistic house-cleaning that any city in the United States ever had".

The party treated no voters, spent no money for hacks, corrupted no electors, but nearly doubled its vote of two years before. Nine Socialists were elected alderman, but Berger lost. He received 15,343 votes to 17,598 for Goff and 23,515 for Rose.

Berger wrote that the forces of "capitalism, graft, reaction, and ignorance" could not have elected Rose in the face of "the grand jury indictments hanging over the heads of his clique", had the local leadership of the Catholic Church not entered the campaign actively on the side of Rose and preached against socialism.¹⁰

The franchise ordinance of 1900 was the big boodle in Milwaukee. It gave the city streets, free of charge, to the streetcar company for thirty-five years. In the engineering through the common council, Payne, in the background, was the directing genius. At the controls were Pfister, the owner of a large block of preferred stock of the street railway company and the boss who paid the expenses of his ward heelers and marked "OK" on political appointments, and E. P. Hackett, chief agent in charge of securing the necessary aldermanic votes. A lot of things came to light afterward, as the saying goes about truth and murder. It was revealed that Pfister made payments to Hackett in sums of \$5,000 and \$10,000 by checks on the First National Bank which were deposited to Hackett's account in the Marine National Bank.

The legislation was paid for in advance, paid to the venal aldermen on the Sunday afternoon preceding the Monday when the ordinance was passed, paid in United States bonds in the Alhambra Theater building by an agent concealed from view, so that one of the conspirators was able to say, "The money was paid, but nobody knows who paid it, and I guess nobody will ever find out."

The majority of the aldermen received about \$3,000 each, several received larger amounts, and one key man in the plot got about \$10,000. Newspaper accounts of the time openly charged that the franchise was purchased for cold cash, estimates for the total amount paid varying from \$130,000 to \$200,000 and estimates of Mayor Rose's cut varying from \$25,000 to \$100,000.

The Democratic boss, Rose, and the Republican bosses, Payne and Pfister, were intimate friends. Some months after the enactment of the franchise ordinance, in a speech at the Democratic national convention, Rose voiced some words that became thenceforth indelibly associated with his name: "This dying for principle is all rot."

Charges that the franchise was a big boodle were widespread and persistent. The town was "het up". Mass meetings protesting against the "outrage" were held; organizations, notably the Federated Trades Council and the Turners, passed scorching resolutions; the courts were appealed to, but the franchise was deemed "legal".

Nobody was ever punished for participation in "the sale" of the franchise. A succession of grand juries did not produce any convictions, and as time went on, the statute of limitations closed the door to further prosecution. Then, in 1907, when the state regulation of utilities was inaugurated, the matter lost its significance.

Concerning "regulation" by the state, John I. Beggs, president of the electric company at the time, had this to say: "I drew up the amendments that were incorporated into the public utility bill and got the law just where I wanted it, and right under the nose of certain lawyers supposed to be representing the public. I got the law where it protects me and gives me a monopoly in more fields than one--and I don't make any bones about saying so, too."

The franchise grab formed the plot of *The Autocrats*, a novel by Charles K. Lush, published in 1901 by Doubleday, Page and Company. Personalities and happenings were only thinly veiled.

Lush was a young newspaper reporter in Milwaukee at the time. Also, he was secretary of the park board of which Henry Weber was the president. Weber was also the proprietor of Weber and Stuber's saloon and restaurant on old East Water Street near Wisconsin where Democratic leaders gathered after council meetings. Upstairs there were rooms for poker, faro, and roulette. It was a favorite place for handing out boodle money.

The hero of the story was Hugh Bannerton, a young newspaper reporter and secretary of the public debt commission. Among the characters were the Honorable Cornelius (Connie) Moran, president of the common council and alderman from the toughest ward in the city. Cornelius Corcoran, called Connie, was the real president of the council and alderman of the Third Ward.

There was the mayor, David Thorn, who "had seized the opportunity to gain the nomination when the popular mind was at a white heat of indignation against the street railway company, a man tall and straight as an arrow...with a mustache and long goatee, which gave him a distinctly fierce and martial mien." Which was descriptive of David Rose.

The arch villain of the plot was Henry Bidwell, streetcar magnate and politician, who resembled Henry Payne, streetcar magnate and politician. Accomplice of Bidwell was Ledlow, the banker, who in all details was the image of Frank G. Bigelow, the banker, president of the First National Bank.

There was Herman Sprogel, alias for Charlie Pfister; August Himmell, president of the public debt commission, alter ego of Henry Weber. There was a newspaper, *The Watchman*, which was *The Milwaukee Sentinel*.

The novel revealed how the conspirators prepared the steal of the franchise for a profit of \$10 million. (*The Social Democratic Herald*, on October 11, 1902, stated: "It is estimated by various businessmen of Milwaukee familiar with financial values that the extension of the Pfister company's grip on the Milwaukee streets which was engineered by Rose was worth at the time between eight and ten million dollars.")

The profits were to result from the increase in the utility stock after the franchise was secured--a jump from \$8 to \$30 a share, in the novel.

Lush's description of the council performance was a description of the actuality. He told how policemen stood guard at the council chamber doors and refused admission to the citizens, how "two corporation lawyers sat concealed behind the President--the smart little Connie Moran--lest there be some slip in the parliamentary procedure," how the mayor strutted down to the clerk's desk in his shirt sleeves and signed the ordinance before the clerk had announced the vote.

Charlie Pfister was indicted by a grand jury in 1905 for stealing \$14,000 from the Wisconsin Rendering Company. This apparently ridiculous charge, that a millionaire would stoop to such chicken-feed embezzlement, was based on the venture that it would put Pfister to the necessity of revealing the disposition of corruption money for the franchise if he wanted to disprove the theft charge.

It was believed by many that Pfister was a bribe-giver in the franchise affair. *The Milwaukee Sentinel* openly asserted that Pfister, among others, did the bribing. Pfister sued for libel, but when the

editors (who later went to *The Free Press*) made answer that their defense would be proof of the charge, Pfister bought the paper and the evidence, too. Newspapermen of the time said that Pfister was gypped in his purchase because the paper had little evidence, not nearly as much as Pfister seemed to fear.

Dave Rose was indicted by the attorney general for bribe-taking in the affair, but nothing came of that.

But one leading citizen who became ensnared in the toils of the law was Frank Gordon Bigelow, who was Ledlow, the banker, in Lush's book. This morality tale was told in *The Social Democratic Herald* of April 29, 1905:

President Frank G. Bigelow of the First National Bank, Milwaukee, one of the owners of the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, the Milwaukee Street Railway Company, the Wisconsin Telephone Company, President of the National Bankers' Association, and one of Milwaukee's "eminently respectable" and safe businessmen, was caught red-handed in a defalcation of a million and a quarter dollars of depositors' money from the bank last week, and was put under arrest. An assistant cashier and two bookkeepers were mixed up in the rascality, and helped to cook the books to hide the steals, which had been going on for some time.

Bigelow is a fine specimen of the crooked "leading" citizen and corporation money worker, and had been for years a partner in the fine deals of the late Postmaster Henry C. Payne and other men of that ilk. During the Northern Pacific trouble Payne got him appointed one of the government receivers for that road.

Locally he was one of a number of corporation men who had an unseen hand in politics and did his share to help Mayor Rose turn the city administration into a feeder for corporation greed. Under his charge the bank was mixed up in numerous shady deals, the Henry Herman affair, for instance. By happening upon a knowledge of this a local newspaperman was able to hold Herman up for several hundred dollars of hush money.

The final undoing of Bigelow resulted from a recent slump in the wheat market. He had been gambling with the bank's money and got in deeper and deeper. It was a matter of common knowledge that he had a hand in several deals in the past, yet the "solid", upright directors of the bank, for whose individual success in life many people had suffered, permitted him to continue--in fact, were so mixed up with him that they had no desire to disentangle themselves from him.

Bigelow was convicted and sent to Leavenworth Prison for ten years.

A carnival of graft enjoyed a long and successful run in Milwaukee prior to the accession to office of the Socialists. The antics of the public officials kept the citizens in such a state of excitement from 1900 to 1910 that censors, organized as grand juries, were constantly reviewing the proceedings.

Two hundred fifty-four grand-jury indictments were finally brought against city and county officials, which resulted in 23 convictions for bribery, graft, petty larceny, and horse-stealing.

A local muckraker, Duane Mowry, wrote in an article, "The Reign of Graft in Milwaukee," in *The Arena* magazine of December 1905:

Sometime during the early part of 1901 it was charged that an attempt had been made to hold up a citizen to the amount of several hundreds of dollars for the granting of the privilege by the park commissioners to join with such citizens in opening and making a street on property abutting one of the parks of the city. The secretary of the park commissioners was discharged from the public service because it was claimed that he did the negotiating for the corrupt fund....

He was said to have made certain disclosures with reference to this particular transaction, acknowledging his guilty part in the same, but implicating others prominent in social and political life.

To add to this there was widespread indignation regarding a crooked "morgue deal", concerning which a newspaper of the time reported: "When the street railway company wanted the ground the old morgue on River Street stood on, the air around the court house was fairly blue with boodle...a new morgue was to be built. Several sites were on the market. A deal was fixed up whereby a site on North Water Street was to be 'selected,' at several times its real value, and the excess over the real cost portioned out to those in the deal.... As a result the county was plundered of thousands of dollars."

As the buzzing talk of frauds and corruption grew louder, the district attorney was constrained to call a grand jury to investigate. Under the law, the county board itself had to choose the members of the grand jury. The resulting jury was made up almost entirely of ward heelers, contractors, and saloon keepers.

Testimony before this jury investigating fraud indicated the caliber of its personnel:

District Attorney: Do any of the members of the jury wish to ask questions?

A Juror: Mr. Haasch (President of the Board of Supervisors), do you know if any of the supervisors got a rake-off from the planking at the time the old morgue site was sold to the streetcar people?

Mr. Haasch: No sir, I do not know. But the contractor himself is a member of this jury, and is sitting right over there. Ask him.

Naturally, the jury found no wrong. The *Social Democratic Herald* pointed out, "Any thorough investigation would have to start with investigating the members of the grand jury."

So, merrily, the boodling game went on. But the buzzing started up again and crystallized into action by the Milwaukee *Turnverein*, a strong social organization at that time, which adopted the following resolution:

In view of the exposures of corrupt actions, in many cases, criminal, among the county and city officers it is the duty of every honest citizen to take steps to insure the punishment of the guilty ones, and therefore be it resolved that the Milwaukee *Turnverein* arrange a mass meeting to be held as soon as possible, to which all honest citizens should be invited, to take the proper steps to secure the punishment of those guilty of corruption.

The mass meeting, a gigantic gathering, was held in September 1903. It was supposed to be a gathering of "good" citizens. An association was formed with some 50 prominent citizens appointed as vice presidents, among whom were Victor L. Berger, Winfield R. Gaylord, and other well-known Socialists. The Socialists who had been appointed vice presidents held a meeting to talk over the situation. They decided that all of them, except Gaylord, who was a whirlwind extemporaneous orator, would indignantly decline the honor of associating with the "half-baked reformers". It was planned, however, for Gaylord to accept the questionable honor on condition that he be named as one of the speakers to address the mass meeting. Gaylord's proposition was accepted by the committee in charge.

The meeting had been extensively advertised, and besides the word had been passed along among the Socialists to be there to watch the show. The meeting was jam-packed. On the stage sat the 50 good citizens. Speaker after speaker attacked the coarse grafting methods of Rose and his henchmen with passion and indignation.

At last, Gaylord got up to speak. He reviewed the fundamental causes of graft and delved into the history of graft cases in Milwaukee.

He named known grafters who had gotten away with the "swag worthwhile", and as he did so, kept his eyes and fingers in the direction of the 50 prominent vice presidents.

Electrifying the crowd, Gaylord declared that among the 50 "good" men sat representatives of the big grafting interests. Subsequent events proved him correct.

However, the challenge thrown down by the Socialists could not be ignored, and in November 1903 the district attorney reported:

There has come to my attention since the last grand jury session, many additional complaints of city officials receiving and soliciting bribes in connection with the granting of franchises, privileges of laying sidewalks over public streets and alleys, extending bay windows and of building bridges over alleys and streets; of receiving and demanding money for the granting of licenses to sell liquors.

Another grand jury, in session from December 1903 until the following February, uncovered corruption which appalled some of the public. Confessions were obtained by the promise of the district attorney and the attorney general that immunity would be granted all grafters who would inform on their accomplices.

The bribe-givers then crowded to the bar to divulge their transgressions. Prominent businessmen, including "good" citizens, squealed on the aldermen and the supervisors who took the bribes. The bribe-takers went to jail and the bribe-givers went free, although it was a state offense to give as well as to take bribes.

Henry Harnischfeger, one of those who called the anti-graft mass meeting and one of the 50 vice presidents, confessed that he with Alonzo Pawling, constituting the Pawling and Harnischfeger Manufacturing Company, bribed former Alderman Sigmund J. Richter with \$100 for a sidetrack privilege.

Revealing was the indictment of Mike Dunn, building inspector and former private secretary to Mayor Rose, who admitted taking a check of \$1,500 from Col. Gustave G. Pabst, president of the Pabst Brewing Company, for an illegal building permit. Dunn was convicted and sentenced to the house of correction for eighteen months.

Anton Asmuth and Bruno E. Fink, president and secretary respectively, of the Milwaukee Malting Company, confessed to giving a bribe of \$1,000 to Alderman Robert Rudolph of the 11th Ward for a sidetrack privilege. He was arrested. The two businessmen related that they had complained to Mayor Rose about the exorbitant boodle charge for the privilege they wanted and that Rose told them, "Fork up, because everything in the city hall is corrupt."

The indictments ran the gamut of frauds: bribery for special privileges--bay windows, sidetracks, franchises; for saloon licenses; for grafting on a personal injury suit against the city; for stealing coal, oats, hay; and for stealing horses.

Another grand jury succeeded the one of 1903, and after that, one followed another, and so *ad nauseam*.

In some of the cases there were strange manifestations of justice and antic ethics of law. There was the story of Frank Niezorawski, commissioner of public works, who grafted a fortune of a quarter of a million dollars and was found guilty in 1905 by a jury. Sitting in judgment was Judge Vinje of Superior, who, in consideration of Niezorawski's "high social position", fined him only \$1,000.

There was the story of Frank Woller, clerk of courts, who was found short in his accounts about \$30,000 and sentenced to the house of correction for three years. Woller's brother, and trusted assistant, was then appointed clerk of courts by Judge Alvin Brazee.

There was the elevating spectacle of Dave Rose serving as attorney for his council president, Corcoran, against whom a grand jury had returned 22 indictments for unlawfully selling feed to the fire department.

There was the startling appearance of former District Attorney Bennett, who had started the graft investigations, as counsel for a number of indicted grafters.

Antic, too, was the make-up of the grand juries. District Attorney Francis E. McGovern described them in *The Free Press*, November 13, 1908. McGovern, who was elected governor in 1910 and 1912, told the newspaper:

In every panel in more than two years there have been from two to seven employees of the Street Railway Company. The result is not always for the best. In the trial of an important bribery case, involving the Street Railway Company, six street railway employees were on the panel. The state exercised its four strikes, and still two were left on the jury and the state was powerless to strike them. President John I. Beggs was the chief witness, and the case was submitted. The jury was out 30 hours and disagreed.

Afterward some of the jurymen came to me indignant and said that from the start ten jurymen had been for conviction but that the two street railway conductors, despite their statements that their positions would not affect their action as jurymen, had held out and refused to discuss the evidence or have anything to do with the other jurors.

Graft motivated actions which appeared intended to secure honesty. Even the installing of voting machines in 1901 only came about because of the graft in it. The machines were bought and the votes in the common council for their installation were bought. A leading citizen

and founder of one of Milwaukee's large industrial plants handled the corruption money which accompanied the machines, and passed out \$20,000 to the council and \$2,500 to three city hall newspaper reporters.

Frederic Heath, editor of *The Social Democratic Herald*, wrote a series called, "Droll Stories of Graft". Here is one of his stories:

In 1895 Milwaukee County was building a new almshouse. Joe Meyers was the contractor, and anything that Joe Meyers touched meant all sorts of interesting things for the gang. Meyers was a familiar figure around the courthouse in those days, though he has latterly fallen from his high station, and at present rests under a fraud order issued by the U.S. postal department because of a scheme he was circulating through the mails to educate people as to how slot machines might be robbed.

Well, the county almshouse was an awful piece of scamp work. The county was fleeced by almost every subcontractor who had a finger in the pie. The writer accompanied an investigating committee that "inspected" it after it was enclosed and nearly finished. He well remembers one of the walls that was so flimsy that it would start to waving back and forth at the pressure of a person's hand.

Speaking of things "waving", recalls the paving of Mitchell Street in 1906 by Alderman-Contractor Henry Hase. Bob Buech, Socialist alderman of the 12th Ward at the time, investigated the job and found it so rotten that "when a car passed over the brick and cement pavement the pavement waved like a field of oats".

Elections were boodled. The following disclosure is from a state senatorial committee investigation in 1909 of the election of Isaac (Uncle Ike) Stephenson, Republican millionaire lumber baron, to the United States senate.

Peter J. Koehler, a former chairman of the Milwaukee County Republican Committee, had been campaign manager in the Republican primary for Uncle Ike's opponent, S. A. Cook, also a millionaire but not as big a spender as Ike who had "opened a barrel at both ends".

Koehler, testifying before the committee, was quite frank. To begin with, he told the committee that of the 127 precincts of Milwaukee, 55 to 60 could be swung by money in any direction, for any party, or for any candidate. At the request of the committee, he described these precincts in detail. When he got as far as the 17th Ward, he declared, "That has gotten to be a bad ward."

"Why a bad ward?" he was asked.

"Oh," he answered, "as we would politically say, she is all shot to pieces."

The 17th was a ward that the Socialists carried.

Then Koehler was asked, "What do you think of the 18th ward?"

"Well," he said, "three precincts are all right. That is Tracy's ward. They don't give back any change there. But in the 20th and 21st wards you can't do anything at all. They are Social Democratic strongholds, with the exception of two precincts. And the 22nd is lost. That is also a Social Democratic ward."

"Do you mean lost," he was asked, "when you can't control it with money?"

"Well, you see we can't do anything. They are Social Democrats up there. There is no use wasting time on them at all, either with money, argument, or anything else. They may take a drink with you but you will get no votes."

No one was convicted of anything as a result of the senate probe.

Lincoln Steffens wrote about the investigation in his *Autobiography*. He reported the testimony of the buying of "ward after ward in Milwaukee", referred to the "lumber senator", but mentioned no names. He used the episode to philosophize about the Socialists:

...knowing Milwaukee and the socialists there and their activity, enthusiasm, and power (they were approaching election to office, since achieved and held) I concluded that it was their vision; their imminent hope, of a better world that made them unpurchasable. They were as honest as any fanatics are; they were believers in some hopeful vision. And then I asked myself a question. If it was vision that made such a difference in men, vision is what we need in the world.¹¹

Steffens' conclusion was a bit simplistic.

There were no grand jury proceedings during the two years preceding the Socialists' winning of control in 1910. The main reason for this was the increasing number of the Socialist vote and the increasing representation in government that warned the grafters to lay off their cruder deals. The grand juries had themselves become something of a political issue; they had cost the taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars. The practical conclusion by Victor Berger was:

Every Social Democratic Alderman and Supervisor has proved himself to be worth his weight in gold to the voters, not only by preventing fraud, but also by saving expenses to the county for grand juries, attorneys' fees, and court expenses.

Not a single Socialist, either before 1910 or after, was found guilty of crookedness in public office. That was why non-Socialists voted for Socialists--why through the years some non-Socialists would "always vote for a few Socialists to keep the other guys honest".

The daily press, which was not Socialist, of course, was constrained on occasion to admit that it was the Socialists who brought morality into the government.

The Milwaukee Daily News on April 30, 1904, commenting on the election that spring, said: "The Socialists, through their adherence to principle and their insistence upon the inviolability of party pledges, will serve to elevate the standard of politics."

The Evening Wisconsin, March 24, 1905, said: "The clean campaigns of the Social Democratic Party in this city have supplied to other political organizations a model worthy of imitation."

The Milwaukee Free Press, March 5, 1906, wrote: "The Social Democrats have brought to the Common Council a spirit of honesty and independence that was needed and that has helped to bring that body into better public repute."

The honesty of the Socialists has been attributed by some past and present observers to their being German and that the Germans abided by an ethic of honesty. And that they were Socialists was attributed to their being German. There is substance to the observations which are, however, somewhat facile without qualifications: All Germans were not honest. Many boodlers in both old parties were Germans. Mayor Rose was of German and Scottish descent. All Germans, honest as well as dishonest ones, were not Socialists. And there were "German cities", such as St. Louis and Cincinnati, where the Socialists made little headway. All Socialists in Milwaukee were not German. Among those elected in the boodling years who were not German were men named Aldridge, Coleman, Churchill, Gaylord, Heath, Poor, Thompson, and Welsh. Victor Berger was a Austrian Jew.

The Socialists were honest because they were Socialists. That is why honesty among them was not unique; it was matter-of-course. Victor Berger said in 1910:

Honesty, that is the capacity not to steal and not to be bribed, when there is the temptation, may be the highest ideal that any capitalist party has set up, but has not reached. With us this kind of honesty is the first and smallest requirement.

N O T E S

1. Bayrd Still, *Milwaukee, The History of A City* (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1948), p. 265.

2. Henry Villard was born in Speyer, Rhenish Bavaria, in 1835 and emigrated to the United States of America in 1853. He was a journalist and a capitalist. As a journalist he reported for leading American dailies the Lincoln-Douglas debates, the Pikes Peak gold rush, and the Civil War from the field of action. As a capitalist, he was a "player" of railroads, among other things. He secured control of the Oregon and California Railroad, the Kansas Pacific Railroad, and the Northern Pacific Railroad. He bought the Edison Lamp Company at Newark, New Jersey and the Edison Machine Works at Schenectady, New York, merging them into the Edison General Electric Company of which he was president until it was reorganized in 1893 as the General Electric Company. In 1881 Villard bought *The New York Evening Post* and *The Nation*. The publications remained in his family for decades. He died in 1900. His son, Oswald, became distinguished as the editor of *The Nation* and a national leader of reform.

3. Still, p. 371.

4. Edward S. Kerstein, *Milwaukee's All-American Mayor: Portrait of Daniel Webster Hoan* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp. 47-49.

5. Paul H. Douglas, *Real Wages in the United States, 1890-1926* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), p. 205.

6. Still, pp. 372-375.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 373-375.

8. *Loc. cit.*

9. *Social Democratic Herald*, October 21, 1905.

10. *Ibid.*, June 4, 1904.

11. Lincoln Steffens, *The Autobiography of Lincoln Steffens* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931), p. 525.

The city already had a small asphalt repair plant when the Socialists assumed leadership, but it hadn't been producing much. F. W. Wilson in charge of this small plant, with a capacity of only 45 square yards a day, laid 8,807 yards of asphalt in 1911 at a cost of 99 cents per square yard. Of this, some 3,588 yards were laid for corporations and individuals at a rate of \$1.50. In this way the cost to the city of laying 5,219 yards of patchwork was in effect reduced to an average of 64 1/2 cents per square yard. Thus, the Socialists easily justified the purchase of a new asphalt repair plant with a capacity of 1,000 square yards per day.

But the story of the asphalt plant and what it represented meant more to the Socialists than the dollars and cents of the matter. The asphalt plant was actually nothing more than a large machine which heated the asphalt, mixed the paving material, and dumped it out like a cement mixer. Every city has one or more nowadays. But in 1911 the idea of a city doing such work on its own was slightly suspect. The Socialists, for their part, had no doubt that the success of the asphalt repair plant proved the validity of some of their ideas. They put it this way in their campaign manual:

The Social-Democrats, as is well known, favor direct employment in all public work. They were blocked in the effort to apply this principle in street construction work by the minority. They did succeed, however, in introducing the principle in a limited way in the asphalt repair work.... Thus this little plant has demonstrated in a simple way the practicability of the plan of the Socialists for direct employment.¹

The Socialists introduced direct employment as far as possible within the department of public works. For example, the bureau of bridges and public buildings reported that

...a great deal of work which in former years was done by a formal contract was executed in 1911 by direct employment. This procedure would, of course, cause increases in the bureau's payrolls. The following comprises work of this nature and gives the cost of labor involved:

Wrecking old Oneida St. swing bridge	\$ 954
Oneida Street Foot Bridge	1,180
16th St. Viaduct reconstruction (completion)	1,130
Drawing plans for buildings	2,210
Remodeling West Side Natatorium	579
Oil houses	286
Greenfield Sanatorium	218
McKinley Park Bath House	223
Babies' Pavilion	115
Partitions, 8th and 9th floors, City Hall	1,700

City Hall repairs	\$1,110
Comfort Station	110
Cement work, First Ave. Bridge	<u>76</u>
Total	\$9,891 ²

Altogether \$45,984.64 was paid in wages for direct employment projects by the bureau of bridges and public buildings and the bureau of street sanitation and repair during the years 1910 and 1911. The amount split nearly 50-50 between the two departments. The Socialists accepted responsibility for increasing the city payroll by this amount, though some of this work would undoubtedly have been done under any administration.

The innovations in city administration instituted by the Socialists were many but were integrated in a comprehensive program. The program began with a complete and detailed diagnosis of the city's condition when the Socialists took office. From the diagnosis, the prognosis could be prescribed. To do this, the best available specialists were engaged. Victor Berger sought out John Rogers Commons, professor of economics at the University of Wisconsin, to take charge of the work. Commons accepted and organized the Milwaukee bureau of economy and efficiency.

In his 200-page autobiography, *Myself*, Professor Commons wrote about the bureau and how it originated, as follows:

When Berger came to me, after that election 1910, and offered me \$6,000 salary, out of which I should pay my personal expenses, if I would make an investigation of the Milwaukee city government with a view to reorganizing it on an efficiency basis, I was eager to accept. But I could not then do so because I could not find a competent executive to organize the investigation under my direction. After six months I discovered that my former student, B. M. Rastall, then with the Extension Division of the University, was willing to resign his position and conduct the Milwaukee investigation.

I asked consent of the University President and Regents, stipulating that I should not miss my classes, but would use the vacation periods and week-ends. I made a trip to the Chicago and New York private bureaus of municipal research looking for men and methods.

Rastall and I brought in, for temporary or permanent work, leading sanitary and other engineers; a young accountant J. B. Tanner, who afterwards constructed a state budget and cost-system for the legislature of Wisconsin; and F. H. Elwell, afterwards Professor of Accounting in the University. I consulted and submitted our work to Harrington Emerson, the famous efficiency expert, and to

Major Charles Hine, organizer of the Consolidated Harriman Railway Lines. I took over to Milwaukee a number of my graduate students.

I spent about \$30,000 of the city's money during eighteen months. We made reports and recommendations on cost-systems and organization for several departments of the city government. These included the city incinerator and garbage collection; the water department; consolidation of sewer and water excavations from the mains to abutting buildings; a complete reorganization of the health department and city hospitals; employment offices; vocational education; street trades; a municipal reference library like McCarthy's at Madison.

We published pamphlet reports and named our organization the Milwaukee Bureau of Economy and Efficiency. Practically all our recommendations and cost systems were installed by the Socialist administration, and I have been told that they have remained to the present day.

It fell to me, when the various recommendations were completed by the staff, to get the Socialist administration to adopt and install them. Considerable unrest and criticism arose because our Bureau took such a long time to get the reports in shape. The Socialist officials and aldermen, to the number of fifty or more, held a caucus every Saturday afternoon to consider and agree upon policies. I appeared at these caucuses, with blueprints and charts, to report progress and answer criticisms. Nearly all of those present were mechanics and trade-unionists. Never before, even in England, had I met such a capable and rational body of men in charge of a city government. I soon discovered that their goal was Efficiency coupled with Service to the poor and the working classes of the city.

The bureau of economy and efficiency carried on its work for eighteen months, but when the nonpartisans came into power at the end of two years, the bureau was abolished. It had been reviled as Commons' "brain trust" and he as "an annex to Socialism. But, by that time," Commons wrote, "my skin was thick."³

Accomplishments that resulted from the work of the bureau of economy and efficiency included the consolidation of the fire and police alarm telegraph systems; consolidation of the plumbing and house-drain inspection; the reorganization of garbage, ash, and rubbish collection; and new cost systems for street sprinkling, oiling, and flushing work, and for cement sidewalk repairs.

The bureau prepared valuable reports for the health department on communicable diseases, sanitary inspection, and on meat, milk,

and other foods. The bureau assisted in a study on water waste, electrolysis, and utilization of by-products at the garbage incinerator.

The effect of the bureau's work was pervasive. The Socialists had assumed the responsibility of putting the city administration on a scientific management basis. In every department modern management principles were instituted in place of the calculated disorganization of the grafters.

Milwaukee became the first city in the country to institute the unit system of cost accounting which designated materials, labor, and management as accounting units. The cost per ton of garbage collected and disposed of could be computed and broken down to show the cost per ton of each of these factors. Thus, the efficiency of all city operations could be monitored and compared. This was perhaps the most significant contribution of the bureau of economy and efficiency.

Fundamental to the changes brought about by the Socialists was their recognition that efficient management required complete accountability for assets, resources, and expenditures. Thus, innovations in the comptroller's office paved the way for more efficient management in all departments.

When Carl P. Dietz became city comptroller, he was determined to introduce an accounting system comparable to that of a large, going, modern corporation. To aid him, he hired a first-class public accountant, Leslie S. Everts, as deputy comptroller. Their first task was to assess the condition of city finances. They found that the Rose administration had allowed an astounding deficit to accumulate. The general city fund was \$166,064.78 in the red, counting \$50,751.49 of worthless uncollected taxes as an asset. In reality the city had a deficit of \$216,816.27.

Essential to gaining control over expenditures was the institution of a scientific budgeting system. The budgets of the previous administrations were jerrybuilt from scraps of letter and note paper, stuck haphazardly in pigeonholes or on vagrant spindles in the various city departments. Upon such nondescript "documents", fortified by hearsay figures, by public clamor, by secret pull, the city had been basing expenditures of millions of dollars. The budget formulated by Comptroller Dietz in cooperation with his Socialist colleagues was a massive volume to be continuously assembled for permanent record. The new system required the various departments to show in detail the purposes for which they sought appropriations. Thus the board of estimates and the common council would have a sound factual basis for making financial decisions. This contrasted sharply with the old system, which was no system at all, of making lump-sum appropriations to the departments without any detailed supporting schedules. Of course, inasmuch as such a method was conducive to graft, it was indeed a "system", *par excellence*.

With budget control established, the comptroller was able to do the job for which his office was originally created; that is, to supervise the expenditure of city moneys.

Comptroller Dietz conducted the first complete inventory of city property in Milwaukee history, and discovered \$12 million worth of assets previously unaccounted for. The total value of city property had been estimated to be about \$31 million. Dietz found the actual value to be \$42,969,075.48. Previously, there had been no way of holding department heads accountable for "missing" property. By means of the new inventory, property accountability was established throughout the city departments.

Another innovation which brought greater control over expenditures was the consolidation of the city payrolls. Nineteen different styles and shapes of payroll were in use before Carl Dietz brought them all together in one ledger. The old payrolls were folded and filed in a manner that permitted easy misplacement and loss. They lacked uniformity in recording method and in data recorded. Potentially valuable summaries of information as well as interdepartmental comparisons could not be made.

In addition to correcting the shortcomings, the new payroll incorporated a distributing feature which made it possible to determine what salaries and wages were paid as outlays, what were paid as operating expenditures, and what were paid as maintenance expenditures.

Important as the foregoing changes were, they were only parts of a completely new accounting system. The wide-ranging effects of Dietz's work can best be appreciated by comparing the old accounting methods with the new. Under the old system the city had a salary account, a books and stationery account, an advertising and printing account, a general purpose account, and other accounts all maintained for the city as a whole. It was impossible to determine individual responsibility for expenses generated, as 40 or 50 different people were involved in charging expenses to the various general accounts. There were some departmental accounts--for the fire, police, and health departments--but even in these cases substantial expenditures were charged to the general accounts. And so it was impossible to secure a true picture of the costs involved in the operations of the various departments. Such offices as those of mayor, comptroller, city treasurer, and city attorney, the major offices, were completely lost from sight.

Dietz segregated accounts by department. The old general accounts were abolished. Expenditures for salaries, office supplies, printing, and other purposes were itemized within the department. All accounts were maintained on the same basis with a uniform format. To determine the total cost of a given service or commodity, it was only necessary to add up such expenditures of the individual departments.

Henry Campbell, a competent businessman,⁴ was appointed purchasing agent in charge of the bureau of purchases. A comparison by Campbell of the old systemless methods with the new system showed such improvements in efficiency and economy as these: Before, he said, 125 people spent at least one-half hour each day making purchases, adding up to 62 1/2

hours a day which at the prevailing wage of 40 cents an hour totaled \$25 per day and \$7,500 per year. With three employees of the centralized system doing all the buying, the expense was lowered to \$4,440 saving \$3,060 a year.

The purchasing department provided a control on expenditures in addition to the new budgeting and accounting systems. The department also included a city store for storage of commodities bought in whole-sale quantities. Substantial savings resulted from buying in large quantities as well as from the greater care taken to shop for the lowest prices. Examples of savings cited by the Socialists were:

Bicarbonate of Soda--Annual saving, \$300
20,000 lbs. @ 1 1/2¢ per lb. instead of 3¢ per lb.

Sulphuric Acid--Annual saving, \$150
10,000 lbs. @ 1 1/2¢ per lb. instead of 3¢ per lb.

Street Brooms, 14 inch--Annual saving, \$370
100 doz. @ \$4.80/doz. instead of \$8.50/doz. (avg.)

Coal for City Hall Use--Annual saving, \$1,000
2,000 tons @ \$3.15/ton instead of \$3.65/ton

Cement--Annual saving, \$2,000
8,000 bbls. @ \$1.25/bbl. instead of \$1.50/bbl.

Crushed Stone--Annual saving, \$13,600
80,000 sq. yds. @ \$1.33/sq. yd. instead of \$1.50/sq. yd.

Under previous administrations, 340 telephones had been rented by the city at an annual cost of \$1,025. Campbell bought the telephones outright for \$588.20. In 1910 desks had cost the city \$30 each; the purchasing agent bought better desks for \$14. More than \$3,000 was saved on fire hose compared with the previous year's purchase. Two hundred police alarm posts were contracted for \$10 below the former non-competitive price.⁵

John J. Handley, business agent of Machinists Lodge 66, was placed in charge of the newly created bureau of street sanitation, as has been previously noted. The department was formed in part by transferring the collection of garbage and ashes and the operation of the incinerator from the health department. Handley's responsibilities also included street cleaning, sprinkling, flushing, and oiling.

Street sprinklers were thoroughly overhauled. Complete records on sprinkler use were instituted in order to establish an accurate cost account. Routes were worked out and specific instructions given to the sprinkler drivers to cover their routes two, three, or four times a day. The time that drivers were on their routes and the amount of water used were recorded.

Since sprinkling was not a completely adequate method of street cleaning, the previous administration had started oiling to a limited extent. Handley extended this work significantly. Three 12,000-gallon storage tanks were set up at separate locations. Each tank had auxiliary equipment for heating and pumping the oil. Over 71 miles of streets were oiled in 1911 with a special 65 percent asphaltic oil at an average cost of 4 1/10 cents per front foot.

He made more progress by introducing power machines to flush the streets, basically horse-drawn wagons with water tanks. Previously, street flushing had been done with fire hose at a cost of 69 cents per thousand square yards. The new system reduced the cost to 15 cents. Nearly 50 miles of streets were flushed regularly. Downtown streets were flushed every night, adjacent streets every other night, and other streets once a week.

Handley systematized the collection of ashes. He kept accounts on a daily basis showing the number of loads taken from each block, the number of teamsters and laborers employed. The records showed when collections were made, and when they were not made, a reason was indicated. In this way the bureau could readily determine whether complaints were justified, and if so, take corrective action. In 1911 a total of 188,000 yards of ashes were collected.

Handley achieved cost savings in garbage collection by gradually introducing the two-horse rig. The new rig had a capacity of four yards, while the one-horse wagon was limited to one-and-a-half yards. The new rig saved about 50 cents per ton. The cost of garbage collection in 1911 was \$82,699.30, down from \$89,156.75 in 1910.

When a new incinerator was put into operation in June 1910 by the health department, the Socialists began weighing the garbage and other waste materials so that cost accounts could be established in this operation as in all others. When the incinerator was turned over to Handley's bureau in January 1911, plans were made for generating electricity by conversion of the heat of combustion to steam. The incinerator was equipped with boilers. What remained to be done was to install a steam turbine. When the work was completed, the city had a 600-kilowatt installation, sufficient power to operate the Milwaukee River flushing station at McKinley Park as well as 300 arc lamps on east-side streets.⁶

The bureau of sewerage under the Socialists increased new sewer construction from 4.6 miles in 1909 to 9.26 miles in 1910 and 11.15 miles in 1911. The bureau included in the sewerage system the areas of the city annexed before the turn of the century which never before had been provided with sewerage. The Socialists also reduced inspection costs from \$128 per thousand feet in 1909 to \$114.40 in 1910.

The Socialists discovered many sewer jobs botched under the old-party regimes. A main laid thirty years before was found that had never been connected with the sewer it was supposed to drain. Cases

were found in which public service corporations had deliberately broken overflow pipes from catch basins and sewers in order to install their own underground facilities. In these cases the bureau made repairs and billed the companies for the work.⁷

A complete system of cost accounting was set up in the bureau of sewerage as in the other departments.

The work of the water department paralleled that of the bureau of sewerage. New water mains were extended at an increased rate by the Socialists into recently annexed sections of the city. In 1909, 12.65 miles had been laid. The Socialists laid 16.55 miles in 1910 and 22.1 miles in 1911. Average cost per lineal foot in 1911 was 75 cents, compared with 78 cents in 1909.

For forty years before the Socialists came into office, Milwaukee had owned and operated its waterworks system. Nevertheless, the Socialists hailed it as a prime example of public ownership. In their *Municipal Campaign Book*, 1912, they declared:

Here is one point at least in which Milwaukee is up-to-date. It is about the only revenue producing public utility the city owns. We are far behind the European cities in this respect, and even behind many American cities....

...the city has cleared a handsome surplus every year. The profit on the water plant has averaged \$53,000 per year during the entire period of public ownership....

And one of the striking features of the municipal control of this public utility is that the poor man is given equal show with the rich. Under private ownership it is the other way. The man who buys enormous quantities of water is given a lower rate. And thus the rich have the advantage of the poor.

In the Milwaukee plant, the rich are charged the same rate as the poor.

This does not seem so significant until the fact appears that on this basis: 38.8 per cent of the total cash receipts of the water department are paid by thirty of the largest consumers....

A striking contrast between public and private ownership of the water system was provided by the users' bills in those days. While a typical Milwaukee citizen paid \$1.04 every three months for 2,300 cubic feet of water, his counterpart in Racine, where the water utility was a private company, paid \$4.92 for 2,300 cubic feet and 50 cents additional per quarter in meter rent.

Profitable as the water department was, the Socialists came up with measures to make it more efficient. At that time there were nearly 500 miles of water mains in the city, some over forty years old. A crew was sent out to test the piping and to search for leaks. This crew stopped leaks during the spring and summer of 1911 amounting to an estimated total of nearly 2 1/2 million gallons of water per day.⁸

Improvement in caring for the health of all the people in and out of their homes, and especially in the factories, shops, and stores, was the objective of the health department. Among the actions of the Socialists were increasing the force of sanitary inspectors, reorganizing food inspections, and starting factory inspection.

To head the health department, Mayor Seidel appointed a non-Socialist, Dr. W. C. Rucker of the United States Public Health and Marine Hospital Service.

Citing the appointment of Dr. Rucker as an example, Victor Berger in an interview published in *The New York Times*, June 5, 1910 explained the Socialists' guidelines on appointments:

For positions where a question of policy is involved, we appoint Social Democrats--naturally, because we have a certain policy to pursue and we want to carry it out. But for positions where technical knowledge is in question or scientific preparation is wanted we take the best man we can get, whether he lives in Milwaukee or not. If necessary we will go to Europe to get him. And we'll ask no questions about his politics.

Take our Health Inspector, Dr. William Colby Rucker. He was in government service. He is the man who stopped the bubonic plague in San Francisco, the man who had charge of the work on yellow fever in New Orleans.

We asked the Surgeon General to lend him to us, and when he wouldn't, Mayor Seidel wired to President Taft and we got him.⁹

Dr. Rucker demonstrated that the endemic typhoid of Milwaukee was due to the contaminated water supply, a condition that the previous administrations had neglected and even denied. He took immediate steps for the purification of the water. Unfortunately, his political opponents were so intent on making difficulties for the Socialists that they resorted to obstructive tactics in even so vital an area as public health. They labeled Dr. Rucker a carpetbagger, like they had Charles Mullen, the paving expert, and eventually hounded him from office.

To take Rucker's place, Seidel appointed a local man, but this time a Socialist, Dr. Frederick A. Kraft. Dr. Kraft took up the fight for improvements, and the Socialists moved ahead in spite of the opposition.

The addition of ten sanitary inspectors made it possible to redistrict the city and make one inspector responsible for each ward. Previously, health inspectors responsible for three or four wards could not maintain effective quarantines nor attend properly to conditions within their districts.

The Socialists introduced an entirely new health department function with factory inspection, conducted by a team made up of four men and one woman.

...Without precedent to guide them, and without previous experience to shape their work, they made 51,357 inspections in 1,147 different factories. In each of these factories some form of improvement was ordered. These improvements ranged from the simple installation of a ventilator to the rebuilding of toilet facilities.

Through the factory inspection force the evils in the Menomonee valley situation were investigated. Orders were served against the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway Company to stop its custom of burning immense amounts of rubbish, which created a serious stench and smoke nuisance. And finally a criminal action in the Municipal Court was instituted. The company thereafter made determined efforts to put out the fires that caused the trouble.

The Semet-Solvay coke works, against which South Side residents had made complaint for years, was declared a source of nuisance, and orders were served to correct the evil. Court injunction prevented final action.

Bakeries, sweat shops, manufacturing plants of every kind and newspaper offices have been inspected and improvements ordered. Better ventilation was provided in downtown playhouses, and ticket theaters received particular attention.-

Dangerous machinery is being better guarded, emery wheels protected, ventilating and heating systems installed, devices for removing dust, smoke and acid fumes provided, and innumerable minor improvements made. In short, a remarkable and rapid improvement of all conditions of labor is going on all along the line.¹⁰

Food inspection was also extended by the addition of a restaurant inspector and two general inspectors. While previously there had been no inspection of meat markets, restaurants, bakeries, candy plants, and grocery stores, none of these escaped the scrutiny of the Socialist health department. Nearly every source of food product came under inspection and results were impressive. In the first year of extended operations, \$10,252 worth (at market price) of tainted foods were confiscated, preventing innumerable bellyaches, as the Socialists put it, and more serious complications.

The milk supply was a matter of special interest. The Socialists added three inspectors to the milk inspection force. Milk was sampled by the glass in restaurants for the first time. More than 40 restaurant owners were prosecuted for selling below standard. Within the city, control of the milk supply was fairly easy to maintain, but a major concern was lack of control at the source. City Attorney Hoan launched a legal fight for an ordinance requiring a tuberculin test of all milk and was finally upheld by the supreme court.

A bureau of education and publications became another important addition to the health department. It had been recognized in the major cities that public education in matters of sanitation and contagious diseases was essential to an effective public health program. The Milwaukee bureau published a monthly bulletin and a folder on contagious diseases and general health. Exhibitions were set up at the International Dairy Show and at the municipal Budget Show. The bureau was responsible for intradepartmental education as well. Every Friday from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. a lecture was given for employees of the department, and twice a month general conferences were held within the department.

The Socialists were leaders in the fight against tuberculosis. In 1906 Alderman Frederic Heath introduced a resolution in the common council to appropriate \$1,000 to bring the National Anti-Tuberculosis Commission exhibit to Milwaukee. This was the first recorded instance of council action with regard to tuberculosis. Mayor Seidel advanced the organized effort against tuberculosis with the appointment of a five-man commission to coordinate efforts of private organizations with the health department. In 1911 the health department acquired the Blue Mount Sanitarium and opened the Greenfield Sanitarium. Both were operated at capacity.

Dr. Kraft was largely responsible for securing an isolation hospital for the city. Though the need had been recognized for at least a decade, no one had been willing to fight for the facility. Construction began in the fall of 1911.

City Clerk Carl D. Thompson made only one appointment when he was elected by the common council; that was of Henry Ohl, Jr., as his deputy. The rest of the staff was retained. One man did not return to work after the elections, and his position was left vacant as an economy measure. Thompson started out by checking the poll lists, with the help of the police. The names of more than 17,000 nonexistent voters were removed.

Among modern management methods introduced by Thompson was a new system for filing council proceedings, incorporating a numbered index system, as well as a new and larger form of printed record. The entire operation of the city clerk's office was "revolutionized" by the introduction of modern filing methods. A major task was the updating of the cumulative index of ordinances, last accomplished in 1906.

Economies effected in the city clerk's office included the following:

Elimination of duplications in the printing of council proceedings	\$ 200
Reduction of the amount of official advertising in newspapers to the legal limit	9,480
Elimination of graft on the posting of registration lists	1,870
Elimination of 17,252 names from the registration lists	900
Creation of a new election commission	\$11,282 ¹¹

The most popular achievement of City Treasurer Charles B. Whitnall was extension of time for the payment of taxes. A change in state laws was first obtained during the Socialist city administration to allow taxpayers up to six months beyond the due date to pay their taxes. Six percent interest was charged for the extension, but this was a big saving for those who before this charge had to pay 15 percent interest to tax sharks. On the basis of the experience in the year before the change, the saving to the citizens amounted to \$54,000. And the city gained, too, by the difference in the 6 percent over the 2 percent the banks paid on city deposits.

Since Milwaukee had been a city, workmen employed on the streets and other public works had to come down to city hall every payday and wait about the office of the city treasurer to collect their wages. About 750 city employees had used up from one to four hours each month in this way. Under Whitnall's direction, the city paymaster in an automobile carried the pay checks to the employees where they worked, effecting a total saving of about \$6,000 a year.

Also, in straightening out the treasurer's department, Whitnall found properties valued at a total of \$37,000 on which taxes had not been paid for more than fifteen years. The information was turned over to City Attorney Dan Hoan to either get the taxes due or the property itself.

Whitnall had a grand plan for the city's finances that was never put into effect because implementing legislation was never enacted. Of a piece in the Socialist rationale, the idea was a bank owned and run by the city. Whitnall argued:

Although the municipal ownership of public utilities is understood and advocated by many, it seems strange indeed that the one central necessity with which all enterprises, of whatever nature, must function, has never been put forward as a public utility, namely: the city treasury.

The city of Milwaukee, a forty million dollar corporation, with an annual income of more than fifteen millions, and in need of various important improvements requisite for the general welfare, which improvements, if carefully promoted, will all be self-supporting, should have the same facilities for doing business that are easily obtained by any financial institution.

The plan for establishing a municipal bank was rather simple. City bonds would be put on deposit with the state treasurer as security. The city treasurer would be placed under the supervision of the state bank examiner. Then by operating on a nonprofit basis, the city could pay depositors 3 percent interest and still come out ahead because the city would no longer have to pay 4 percent interest to the private banks. The city had been maintaining a floating debt of about \$10 million mainly because state law did not permit the collection of taxes in advance.¹²

Daniel W. Hoan was the youngest of the men elected to city-wide office in 1910; he was twenty-nine. And as the first Socialist city attorney, his first public office, Hoan assembled a staff of bright young lawyers. Energetic, efficient, the new team worked together to save the city hundreds of thousands of dollars.

In previous administrations, actions against public utilities were dodged, delayed, and neglected. Even when the city attorney did go to court, the corporation lawyers almost always won. When Hoan took office, that changed.

Dan Hoan won a fight to compel the street railway to pay license fees for the first time and won a suit for payment of \$72,000 in back fees. He won another suit against the street railway to pay for pavement between the tracks as provided in its franchise, and the city recovered \$315,000. He compelled the street railway to comply with a city ordinance requiring sprinkling between the tracks. And he won for streetcar passengers the benefit of getting partial double transfers on cross-town lines.

During Hoan's term, total damage settlements against the city were reduced an average \$33,000 annually to \$9,000. He saved the city \$50,000 by his successful defense against a suit to seize the land on which the refuse incinerator was located. He recovered \$12,000 for the city by compelling the steam railroads to pay for pavement along their tracks.

Under Hoan's direction, cases involving health and welfare were prosecuted with the vigor that only genuine concern could generate. Cases involving housing codes, sanitation, smoke nuisance, weights and measures, illegal employment offices, and the sale of liquor to minors, for example, were no longer brushed under the carpet.

A new attitude by the government in industrial disputes was exemplified by Hoan's refusal to prosecute strikers for calling strike-breakers "scabs".

One office that the Socialists did not control was that of the tax commissioner who was responsible for property assessments. It had been the policy of Tax Commissioner Schutz to make no assessment on stock holdings in foreign corporations. Hoan challenged this by going to the state tax commission and getting a ruling that such property should be assessed.

Hoan and his staff prepared more than 40 bills submitted to the state legislature, most of which were for expanding the city's powers of home rule. The restrictions of the city charter and of statutes on the authority of common councils would have made the organization of a modern city government impossible. The restrictions were highlighted by laws pushed by the Socialists and passed by the state legislature in 1911.

The state legislature passed a bill authorizing the city to build and maintain public lavatories. Another bill allowed the city to build and repair docks. A bill was passed to prevent corporations from closing streets and alleys for private purposes without notice to the city. The power of excess condemnation was granted to Wisconsin cities in another bill; this was the power to acquire land adjacent to boulevards and parkways in excess of requirements for expansion of the roadway and to replat and resell the excess. A law to legalize bonds issued by the city of Milwaukee for an electric lighting plant was passed; the bond issue had been declared invalid in the courts. Cities operating heating plants secured authorization to install and operate pipes and mains in conjunction with such operations. Authority to grant streetcar franchises on parkways and the right to charge license fees on interurban franchises were obtained. All those measures were introduced by Socialists.¹³

THE HOME RULE STORY

On the issue of home rule as such, there was much discussion in the legislature. Every party had a home rule plank in its 1910 platform. The bill that received the greatest attention was introduced by Assemblyman Erich Stern, a Progressive. The Stern bill proposed to give cities the power to legislate changes in their own charters. Senator Winfield R. Gaylord and City Attorney Hoan agreed that if enacted the Stern bill would fail a test of constitutionality on the grounds that the legislature could not delegate its legislative authority. Senator Gaylord argued that the cities did not want the power to make laws, but the power to "do those things necessary and convenient for the handling of their own municipal affairs". A substitute bill introduced by Gaylord was defeated. The Progressive

measure was passed and as the Socialists predicted was declared unconstitutional by the supreme court.

During that same session, Senator Gaylord managed to get a joint resolution passed for a constitutional amendment which would allow municipalities to write their own charters. The resolution passed the second time in 1913, but the voters rejected the amendment in 1914. The home-rule amendment in effect today, Article XI, section 3, of the state constitution, was ratified in the general election of 1924. Its basic provision is as follows:

Cities and villages organized pursuant to state law are hereby empowered, to determine their local affairs and government, subject only to this constitution and to such enactments of the legislature of statewide concern as shall with uniformity affect every city or every village. The method of such determination shall be prescribed by the legislature.

Antecedent to the consensus for home rule in 1910 and going back to the genesis of the city, there was a variant evolution of authority in Milwaukee. Milwaukee was a city before Wisconsin became a state. The city was chartered on January 31, 1846 while Wisconsin was still a territory. Milwaukee's city government then was more a municipal confederation than a municipality. Historian Bayrd Still describes it:

...Each ward continued to be an autonomous corporation, responsible for its own debts and liable for loans for the general improvement of the city only when a majority of its aldermen had voted for them. Each individual ward could sue or be sued, receive legislative permission to undertake improvements on its own initiative, and decide for itself in how far it wished to participate in common municipal activity. It was even with difficulty that fire protection was organized on city rather than ward lines.

The chief evil of this situation was the increasing power it gave the aldermen. Ultimately they were authorized to levy special taxes for street, river, and harbor improvements, to borrow money and issue ward bonds for street work, and to provide for building sewers, sidewalks, and the like. Since this work was contracted for by the aldermen and supervised by them, the door was open to graft and ward politics.

.....

By the spring of 1851, mounting opposition to municipal expenditures fostered the ascendancy of the conservative wing of the local electorate. Loans to railroad

companies, coupled with outlays incident to the grading of streets and the construction of schools and bridges, had raised the costs of government until the taxpayers and property owners were up in arms, and the municipal debt threatened the financial stability of the city itself.¹⁴

In the preceding year, the city council had set up a committee to formulate charter revisions that would put a check on expenditures and give the city greater power to meet its obligations. Proposed changes were rejected by the electorate in May 1851, although reform candidates were generally successful in the municipal election. In August a popularly elected charter convention drafted a new charter, which was endorsed by a two-to-one vote of the electorate in February 1852.

The new charter enhanced the authority of the municipal government, provided for an appointed comptroller, and made members of the council personally accountable for contracting ward debts in excess of appropriations. The city finances took a positive turn during the next two years.

Renewed enthusiasm for railroad expansion flared up then, and for city improvements, and opened the door again to graft and corruption. Every major politician had a tie-in with one railroad interest or another. With the election of Byron Kilbourn as mayor in 1854, his wing of the Democratic Party effected a coalition of working-class and foreign-born elements which gave it dominance in local affairs for the next fifteen years.

The local machine of the so-called "Regular" Democrats was built around the laborers and contractors who had most to gain from the craze for municipal improvements. A provision of the new charter which had designated the aldermen street commissioners provided the basis for a new wave of extravagant spending. In one year alone, 1856, the city's bonded debt increased by \$482,000 to nearly \$700,000, more than 20 times the level in 1851. The total indebtedness of the city reached a level exceeding one-third of the assessed value of the city by 1857. In that year a tax was levied which exceeded that of the previous five years combined.¹⁵

Reaction set in, producing the Albany Hall movement for charter reform. Charter amendments enacted in the 1858 state legislature provided for creation of a bicameral city legislature, substitution of three elected street commissioners for the aldermen-commissioners, replacement of the ward-elected property assessors by three assessors chosen by the mayor and the council. Limits were stipulated for annual appropriations and controls established for salaries and other administrative expenses. The mayor obtained the power of the veto, but the majority of any board could override him. The reformers were not satisfied with this and placed before the electorate in February 1859 a completely revised charter. It was defeated by a large margin primarily because of its vagueness regarding debt and its implication of repudiation.

In the spring election of 1858, a reform candidate, William A. Prentiss, was elected mayor on the People's ticket--the one break in Democratic control during this period. When the Democratic machine took over again in the next election, the reform and conservative elements of the electorate turned to the Republican Party. The Democrats went on to perfect their machine, and during the sixties boasted that Milwaukee was "the banner Democratic city of the nation". Indeed, the Republicans placed no candidates in opposition in 1863 and 1864.¹⁶

The Democratic regime was not a complete disaster. In 1861 members of the council and prominent citizens responded to the urgency of the city's financial situation by coming up with a plan which resulted in the Readjustment Act, passed by the state legislature in March 1861. Long-term funding of the city's debt was provided for, and a sinking fund was established to retire the readjustment bonds that were authorized. In 1861 the city had a total debt of \$2,825,850. The Readjustment Act prohibited the city from contracting new debts until the value of readjustment bonds outstanding was reduced to \$500,000. By 1869 the Milwaukee mayor was in a position to brag about the financial condition of the city in comparison with other cities of the nation.

During the period from May to October 1867, another charter convention deliberated over ways to overcome the sectional autonomy of the wards and the resultant inefficiency and graft. With the demise of the Prentiss reform administration in 1859, the ward bosses had regained control of the street repair and improvement business, and a major objective of the convention was to create a public works commission. The new charter finally presented in the municipal election of 1868 was defeated. Proponents of a public works commission continued to make their case, however, and in the next spring election the electorate finally endorsed the idea, although the foreign-born element was unyielding as a solid block of Democratic opposition. But the Democrats lost their dominating influence.¹⁷

In 1874 a new charter was drawn up by the common council and submitted to the state legislature for enactment without first receiving endorsement by the city electorate. This charter would endure, as amended, until 1940.

The two-chamber legislative system was abandoned. A new council was created consisting of 39 aldermen from 13 wards, one member from each ward to be elected annually to a three-year term. The new council had increased authority in the areas of taxation and expenditure, but the new charter vested major authority in administrative boards, continuing a practice that had evolved during the sixties.

Liberal spending again became a sore point in local affairs, and in 1881 a conservative movement secured state legislation severely limiting the taxing power of the council. For all practical purposes the city's fate was in the hands of the state legislature, administered in large part by the boards and commissions which it had created, and

subject to special legislation. The urban-rural struggle for political pre-eminence was just beginning.¹⁸

In 1887 the common council memorialized the legislature for a general act giving cities control of their own finances. This had little effect. In 1892 a constitutional amendment took effect which prohibited the state legislature from enacting special laws with respect to designated matters. Among these was city charter amendment. The making of general laws pertaining to these matters was not affected, however. Classes of cities had been previously specified for purposes of general legislation, and since Milwaukee was the only city in its class, the amendment had little effect in changing Milwaukee's status. But this was the first major step toward home rule for Wisconsin cities.

During the nineties, home rule grew into a major political issue. In 1902 the Milwaukee common council began promoting the idea with other city councils in the state. In 1907 the legislature conceded the authority to cities of the first class, of which Milwaukee was the only one, to hold a convention for the purpose of drawing up a comprehensive home-rule charter to be submitted to the next legislature. The Socialists saw this as a breakthrough in the rule of the boodlers and joined enthusiastically in the preparation for a charter convention.¹⁹

Victor Berger said here was the long-awaited chance to establish home rule and majority rule, stop graft, and "meet the needs of a modern, great city". The movement received considerable support, including endorsements by many civic, commercial, and religious organizations but not the Chamber of Commerce. Nor Mayor Rose, who, as Historian Still wrote,

...viewed the whole scheme as an attempt of the Social Democrats to engraft their "doctrines upon the fundamental law"; and when it appeared that the Republicans and Social Democrats were going to control the convention, he declared the gathering unconstitutional--"a voluntary gathering with no legal status", denied it the use of the city hall, and succeeded in getting the finance committee of the council to refuse funds for its support.

But the convention went ahead anyhow and drew up a charter that embodied the home-rule principle. The charter was passed by the state senate but killed in the assembly in 1909.²⁰

For 18 years before the Socialists came into power, the old party city fathers had issued bonds to pay for paving work. The city borrowed money on twenty years' time to pay for pavements that wore out on an average of seven years. Three million dollars had been saddled on the city by these obligations, and during the eighteen years the city had paid \$1.5 million in interest on these bonds.

Besides this the city lost heavily all these years in higher prices for its contracted work, since the contractors had to go to the banks to cash their bonds. Forced to redeem the bonds at a discount, the contractors naturally charged the discount to the city in their bids.

The Socialists brought about an end to the bond financing and its interest burden and put the city on a cash basis. They drew up legislation, sanctioned by the common council, to amend the charter to prohibit city authorities to issue bonds for street improvements. This was passed by the 1911 legislature, as was another amendment which stopped the issuance of bonds to pay the annual cost of dredging the city's three rivers.

STICKING BY THE UNIONS

The "Milwaukee idea" of the integration of political and economic activity was put into operation as soon as the Socialists took office. The policy of employing union labor whenever possible was immediately adopted--and this at times was carried out with initiative and forcefulness. For example, when the C. F. Conway Company of Chicago was successful in bidding on an asphalt-paving contract, the administration found out that the company had been fighting union labor for three years in Chicago. The Socialists persuaded the company to accept unionization, and the company's workers were organized not only in Milwaukee but Chicago as well.

The city employed union labor exclusively in all departments employing mechanics. The department of public works ordered that all horseshoeing be done in union shops. Socialists on the county board of supervisors secured union labor on the construction of the Grand Avenue viaduct and on construction of the County Agricultural School.

When the city began employing union labor directly for repair and repainting of the street-sprinkling wagons, the union label began to appear on the wagons. And it popped up in other places as well. That street litter cans were union-made was attested by the labels of the Sheet Metal Workers and the Painters unions.

The label of the Allied Printing Trades Council, the "bug" in union slang, was required by the Socialist administration on all city printing. A result of this was the unionizing of the H. H. West and the Siekert & Braun printing and binding shops.

The cooperation with the unions was complete. In addition to employing union labor and seeking to have contracts fulfilled by employers of union workers, the Socialists organized city employees. The bridge tenders were organized, and their work shifts were changed from seventy-two to twelve hours. All firemen, engineers, oilers, and coal passers in the city and county buildings were organized and given one day off a week. Elevator Operators' Union No. 13803 was

organized, and all city-employed operators became members. Elevator inspectors became members of the elevator constructors' union. The garbage and ash collectors were organized.

The desire and ability to organize employees of the city emanated of course from *the personal union*.

Wages were increased and hours reduced. Wages for all skilled workers were established at union scales, and the pay of laborers was raised from \$1.75 a day to \$2.00. The Socialists hoped that the latter would in effect become a minimum wage for the local economy. The eight-hour day for all public employees and for those working under public contract was established by city ordinance. Policemen were given an additional two days off each month.

The licensing of all stationary engineers, which the engineers' union had sought for 20 years in the interests of competence both in work and public safety, was required in another ordinance. The licensing of elevator operators was also established by ordinance.

Unemployment was a problem which faced Mayor Seidel from the beginning of his term. Although there had been recovery from the 1907-08 recession, the national and local economies faltered again in 1910, and unemployment in Milwaukee worsened in 1911.

Soon after taking office, Seidel called a meeting of civic leaders to find local solutions to the unemployment problem, but it wasn't until August 1911 that a substantial cooperative effort was mobilized. The common council passed a resolution then creating a citizens committee on unemployment made up of five representatives from the Federated Trades Council, five from the Merchants and Manufacturers Association, and five from both the county board and the common council. The committee set up a free employment office that was so successful that it put the state employment office to shame.²¹ When the industrial commission was established in 1911, it was given control of the four existing state employment offices including the power to replace the political appointees in charge of the offices. In Milwaukee the office head was replaced by two Socialists who had been in charge of the municipal employment office. John R. Commons, one of the three original members of the industrial commission, recounted that

the Progressive governor of the state, who had appointed us, came to us with the alarm that a delegation of eminent citizens, including a judge of a Milwaukee court, had protested to him against this amazing concession to what they argued was the hotbed of socialism in Milwaukee. Our chairman, Mr. Crownhart, proposed a solution. Let the governor invite his delegation of political supporters to meet in Milwaukee with the employer members of our advisory committee who had joined in recommending to us the appointments. The meeting was held. We learned afterwards of the drubbing which the employers gave to their political fellow citizens. The political incumbent, they said, had been running merely

a loafing place for "heelers", and the employers could not take on anybody sent to them for jobs. Indeed, they had been forced to set up a private "citizens" employment office, alongside the state office, in order to find jobs for the competent unemployed. These two socialists were already operating that office and sending to the employers the kind of applicants they needed in their shops.²²

The result of the reorganization of the state employment office was a threefold increase in placements, which was largely due to the discontinuance of the municipal office.

WHAT ZABEL DID

Winfred C. Zabel, elected district attorney on the Socialist ticket in November 1910, was the man who cleaned up the red-light district. The fight to shut down the district was started when the common council turned down applications for liquor licenses in the district. Then 14 resort keepers were prosecuted for violating the liquor laws. At first it looked like they would fight back, but when Zabel began lining up beer-wagon drivers as witnesses, pressure was applied behind the scenes and they all pleaded guilty. In the course of the proceedings, it came out that the chief of police by applying his personal interpretation of the laws and what was right and wrong had failed to uphold his oath of duty.

Zabel made his big move in October 1911 by raiding three whorehouses and starting prosecution of the keepers. Kitty Williams' place was the first to be padlocked. Three nominal hotels, the Ozark, the Arlington, and the Grand, were raided and more than a dozen couples arrested in each. The operators were convicted and each fined \$350 and costs. Other joints soon closed one after the other. In May 1912 Zabel ordered the district vacated. By June 15 empty fronts and for-rent signs testified to the end of an era.

Zabel's handling of a *cause célèbre* of the times showed why corporations opposed election of Socialists to offices such as district attorney. It was the "Union Label Case". The typographical union had started a suit in 1907 against two parties for violation of a law that guaranteed to labor organizations control of their union label. The law had been enacted through the joint efforts of the unions and the Socialist legislators in Madison.

The case had been continued 47 times up to the time Zabel took office. For three-and-a-half years nothing had been done by any of the former district attorneys to settle the case. Zabel prepared the suit after his election, brought it to trial in seven months, and won it for the union.

Another illustration of the Socialists' recourse to law to protect workers came up in a hatters' strike in the spring of 1912. In

the 1911 legislature the Socialists had won enactment of a statute prohibiting the misrepresentation of conditions in advertising for employees. The specific intention was to compel employers to inform prospective employees when there was a strike on and to compel them when they advertised for strikebreakers to do so openly.

Twenty men had been brought to Milwaukee from Philadelphia by the Middleton Manufacturing Company to take the place of strikers, but they had not been told of the strike in progress. When the men arrived, they refused to scab. They were far from home and out of a job. Men from the local union found out about the matter and took it up with District Attorney Zabel. Under the new law, the company was liable to a fine of \$1,000. Zabel got the company to pay the fare of the men back to Philadelphia, with their expenses. The men were satisfied, and the Milwaukee unionists won their strike.

The foregoing are examples of how Zabel functioned in his office for the benefit of the common man. He was exceedingly energetic. Another highlight of his tenure was his sustained and successful attack on loan sharks who had been violating the 24 percent interest legal limitation on money loans by charging lenders as much as 200 percent interest. Zabel won a series of convictions which produced an agreement by the loan societies to stop their usuries. Not only adherence to the law was won but an estimated saving in interest payments by working-class people of \$50,000 to \$75,000 a year.

The Socialist sweep of the county offices in the election of 1910 included, besides Zabel, Martin Plehn, county clerk; Charles V. Schmidt, treasurer; William A. Arnold, sheriff; Jacob Hunger, register of deeds; William C. Young, clerk of circuit court; and Herman L. Nahin, coroner.

With Socialists in control of both, the county and city administration worked together in an unprecedented way. In the setup before the Republicans had been running the county while the Democrats ran the city.

Under the Socialists, the fee system was abolished in all departments under the county administration, thus turning thousands of dollars into the county treasury which previously went into the pockets of officials. The Socialists established the practice of securing for the county interest money on all deposits. They introduced up-to-date methods of keeping records and orders and an inventory of county property.

The union label appeared on printing for the county departments.

The narration of what the Socialists did in the city and county governments of Milwaukee is followed by two chapters on what they tried to do and succeeded in doing in the state government. It seems somehow fitting that this chapter which began with a description of the Augean stables be epilogued with two more stories of Socialist deeds.

When the Socialists began occupying space in city hall, there was next to the mayor's office on the second floor a large room that had been used but one or two weeks in the year. All the rest of the time it was unoccupied. The Socialist administration offered it, rent free, to the extension department of the University of Wisconsin. An office was promptly opened where people could register for courses in engineering and other branches. The city council chamber was thrown open to a course of free lectures under the auspices of the state university. Evening and afternoon classes in municipal and sociological subjects were started.

The last tale is one that has not been retold by the non-Socialist press as it is here:

The first community Christmas tree for Milwaukee was established in 1910 by the direction of Mayor Emil Seidel. How it came about is told in Seidel's manuscript with The State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Seidel got the idea from a story in a magazine that he bought at a newsstand on his way home from city hall. The story was written by a schoolteacher in a small town about a community Christmas tree that she had set up "to cheer the sojourner who could not be home for Christmas".

It was, Seidel wrote, "as far as I know, the first community Christmas tree in the country."

When Seidel read the story, Christmas was "less than a week away", but he asked Harry Briggs, the commissioner of public works, if the city could still have a tree. Briggs answered, "Just say the word." So, Seidel recalled:

On Christmas Eve our tree blazed forth in all its glory in the Court of Honor. A platform had been put up on the grounds of the Deutscher Club (later renamed the Wisconsin Club). The nearby carillon boomed its Christmas airs. A band played greetings. Samuel McKillop led in the singing. I was on with a Merry Christmas talk. That was Milwaukee's first Community Christmas Tree.

But America's first community Christmas tree? Seidel wrote in 1938, "As for the teacher, I cannot recall her name, neither the name of the little city or town...or the name of the magazine for I bought it only once."

N O T E S

1. *Milwaukee Municipal Campaign Book, 1912* (Milwaukee: County Central Committee of the Social-Democratic Party, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin) (hereinafter cited as *MMCB*), pp. 136, 138.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

3. John R. Commons, *Myself, The Autobiography of John R. Commons* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1963. Formerly published (1934) by the Macmillan Company), pp. 151-153.

4. Campbell was also a member of the Social Democratic Party. Five years later, on May 12, 1915, his resignation was accepted by the county central committee upon his appointment in the nonpartisan administration.

5. *MMCB*, pp. 110-114.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-105.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-110, 139.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-119.

9. *The Social-Democratic Herald* ran a story about the Berger interview in *The New York Times*, reporting that Berger was on a lecture tour in the East, that the interview filled an entire page in the Sunday edition, that the interview was reprinted in the daily newspaper of the Eastern cities, and quoted some of the questions and answers. The *Times* story by Charles Willis Thompson was illustrated with a line portrait of "Victor L. Berger the Socialist Leader of Milwaukee" and a photo of Mayor Emil Seidel, Berger, and Frederic C. Howe in conversation. (Howe was a nationally known municipal reformer in Cleveland.)

The Socialist assumption of the Milwaukee government was, of course, news of national interest. But the *Times* interview attracted special attention because of Berger's prophecy blazoned by the boxed banner headline "CATHOLICISM OUR FINAL FOE", SAYS OUR SOCIALIST CHIEF and a six-column deck, Victor L. Berger, Milwaukee's New Leader, Predicts Death Grapple/at the Last Between Victorious Socialism and Roman Church. "In Milwaukee...the Catholics fought us bitterly," Berger said, and predicted that the fight would continue and become a world-wide conflict between the red *Internationale* of Socialism and "the black *Internationale*" of the Roman Catholic Church.

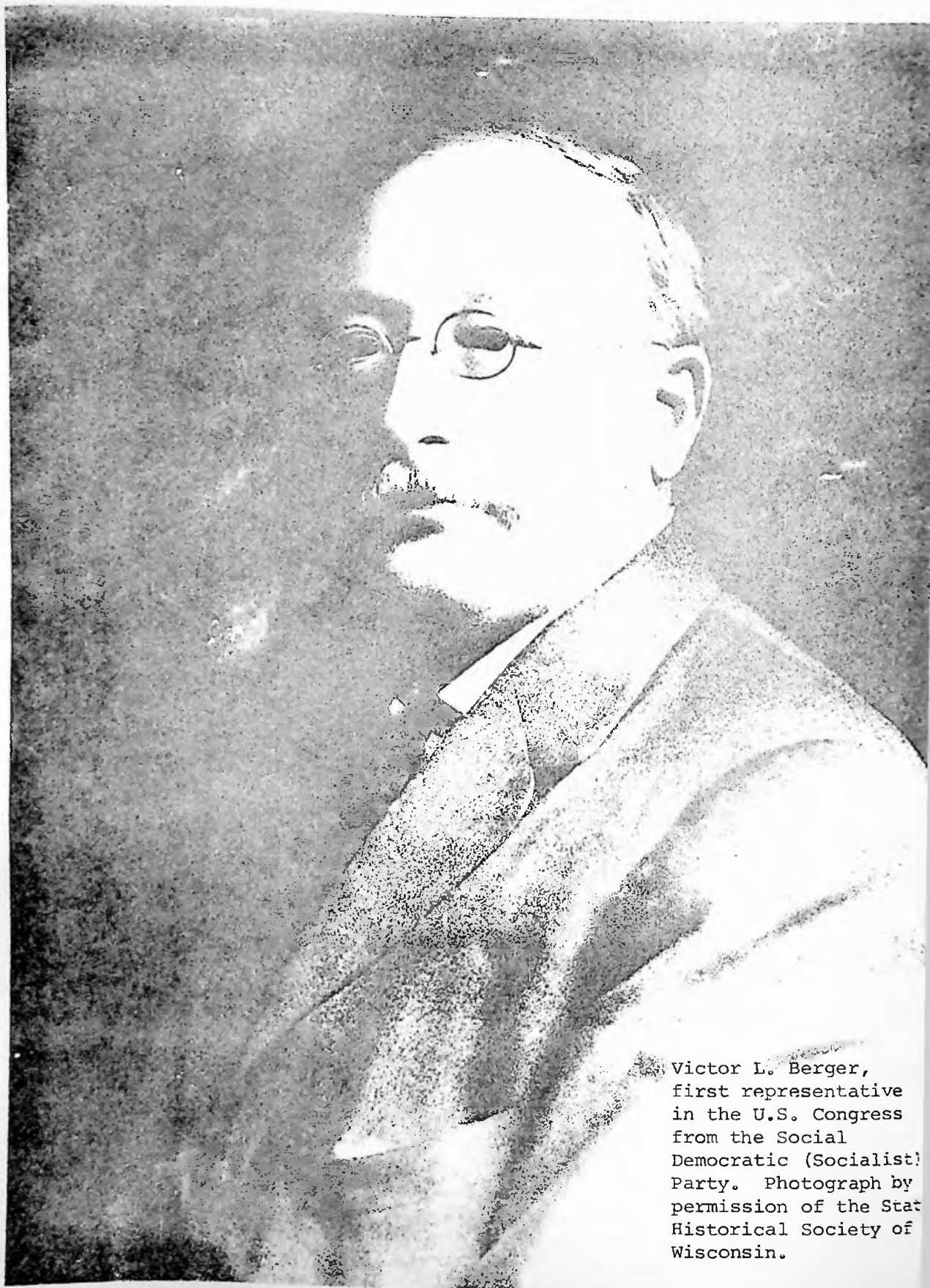
The Social-Democratic Herald in its report on the interview did not include mention of Berger's prediction of the final struggle--perhaps because back home in Milwaukee that was not news.

10. *MMCB*, pp. 75-84.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-52.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-74.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-68.
14. Bayrd Still, *Milwaukee, The History of a City* (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1948), pp. 106, 139, 140 *et passim*.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-145.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 147-156.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 164-166.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 376.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 377, 378.
20. *Lcc. cit.*
21. Superior was the first Wisconsin city to have a free employment office, established in 1899 by a city ordinance that also provided for an advisory committee of labor, business, and civic representatives. Cf. Gordon M. Haferbecker, *Wisconsin Labor Laws* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1958), pp. 114 ff.
22. Commons, pp. 104-105.



Emil Seidel, the first Socialist Mayor of Milwaukee, elected to office in 1910. Under his administration major reforms occurred in public health, legislative research, sanitation, fiscal accountability, streets, and public safety. He cleaned out graft, corruption, and prostitution, and instituted unprecedented economies in every city department. A leader of the "Sewer Socialists" who were as interested in practical administration of government as in socialist ideology, Seidel was a self-educated and widely-read intellectual although a skilled laborer by trade. Photograph reproduced by permission of *The Milwaukee Journal*.



Victor L. Berger,
first representative
in the U.S. Congress
from the Social
Democratic (Socialist)
Party. Photograph by
permission of the State
Historical Society of
Wisconsin.

CHAPTER VI

THE CRUSADES FOR SOCIAL LAWS

(PART ONE)

The first state platform of the Social-Democratic Party in 1898 called for "immediate enactment in the state of Wisconsin" of 12 social and labor laws. Number one on the list of demands was the eight-hour working day. "Also an unbroken rest for at least thirty-six hours for every wage-worker for every week."

Prohibition of employment of children under sixteen years of age and of women an night in factories and workshops was demanded. Other laws proposed would provide employment of the unemployed by public authorities; protection of health, life, and limb and an efficient employers' liability law; and a graduated income tax.

At the same time, the national platform of the party, which emphasized and itemized demands for public ownership of industries, services, and resources, demanded "national insurance of working people against accidents, lack of employment, and want in old age".

The joint development of the Socialist Party and the trade union movement led, in time, to the realization of their demands for labor and social laws.

The context of the Socialists' contribution to the enactment of this legislation is the political history of Wisconsin. Inasmuch as the Socialists were a minority party, understanding of this background is important in order to appreciate their role.

In May 1848 Wisconsin became the 30th state in the Union. Within a decade, the rush to build railroads made the railroad companies the greatest power in the state, as, indeed, they were elsewhere. The farmers were helpless to do anything about discriminatory and excessive freight and storage rates. The Panic of 1873 eventually brought agrarian discontent to a head in the Granger Movement. A Granger governor was elected, and a law was passed in 1874 which established a railroad commission and provided for regulation of passenger and freight rates. The law, the Potter Law, was upheld by the state supreme court but was repealed in 1876 after the railroads had halted construction and cut services to force the issue with the public.

The political struggle to balance the rights and privileges of the individual against those of the corporations would characterize

the political history of the nation and state for the next seventy-five years. The struggles for railroad and public utility regulation, for trade union recognition, for workmen's compensation, unemployment compensation, and food and drug control laws are examples of adaptation to changing economic realities.

In social legislation Wisconsin was responsive ever since its first decade when legislation was passed providing for the care of the blind, the deaf and dumb, the insane, and the criminal. During the 1870's the state board of health and vital statistics was established, a state veterinarian was appointed, and boards of pharmaceutical, dental, and medical examiners were established. Factory inspection and enforcement of state safety regulations became a function of the bureau of labor statistics. An insurance commission was established in 1878 and held constitutional in a state supreme court decision that would provide precedent for future insurance laws.¹

When Robert Marion La Follette was first elected to congress in 1884, his success, as well as his election in 1880 as district attorney of Dane County, resulted from his direct appeal to the people. He was elected as a Republican who had circumvented party machinery. His opposition to the party bosses who paid tribute to the railroad and lumbering interests made his reputation as an independent power within the Republican Party. When the economic Panic of 1893 intensified popular hostility toward monopoly control of politics, La Follette became the rallying *persona*. After the Progressive and Stalward factions of the party had formally split, they each ran candidates for governor, beginning in 1894. La Follette ran twice unsuccessfully, in 1896 and 1898, before winning election in 1900. Not until 1905, when the first Socialists had been elected to the legislature, did the Progressives gain dominance in the government.

The political successes of the Social-Democratic Party and the Progressive Republicans ran parallel courses. Their leadership created and sustained a climate for radical experiment in government methods. Both share in the remarkable legislative achievements which, since the turn of the century, made Wisconsin a vanguard state in social legislation.

From its beginning, the Socialist Party was also specific in its concern for the farmers. Under the rubric "Demands for Farmers", the national platform in 1898 called for, among other things, "Construction of grain elevators, magazines and cold storage buildings by the nation, to be used by the farmers at cost." The state platform included in its demands legal incorporation of "Farmers' Alliances" (as well as trade unions) and state insurance of farmers' property against fire, hail, and other causes.

Nevertheless, the ideologies of the Socialists and the Progressives differed fundamentally. The Socialists expected that capitalism would be replaced by collective ownership of the means of production. They believed that the concentration of economic power in the trusts was

the inevitable result of free competition; they regarded this as desirable, since it resulted from the rationalization of industrial processes which enhanced productivity.

The Progressives wanted to regulate capitalism to assure that competition in the prevailing economic system would be fair.

But in their approach to immediate problems, to social legislation, and improvement in government, the Socialists and Progressives had much in common. And it was this that gave birth to the "Wisconsin Idea".

Dr. Charles McCarthy, father of Wisconsin's legislative reference library, is credited with having originated the phrase after years of observing Wisconsin government in action. He explained the "Wisconsin Idea" as an attitude the essence of which was "a willingness to experiment in meeting the changing needs of the economic order."

When Emanuel L. Philipp was elected governor in 1914, bringing the early Progressive era to an end, he asserted that "the victory is a complete repudiation of the much heralded Wisconsin Idea". Yet during his six years as governor, the only reversal was the repeal of the provision for a second choice in the primaries.²

The 1905 legislature was historic in a number of respects. It was the first to which Socialists were elected, and it was the first to be controlled by Progressive Republicans. What the Socialists, one senator and five assemblymen, did in that session is recounted in a bachelor's thesis of 1905 by David Allen King. He wrote:

They were placed on committees as follows: Brockhausen, Manufactures and Labor; Alldridge, Judiciary; Strehlow, Cities; Berner, Health and Sanitation; Rummel, chairman of the committee of Manufactures and Labor, and a member of several other committees.

Mr. Brockhausen immediately introduced a bill establishing an eight hour day for state and municipal work. Mr. Berner took steps toward an amendment to the constitution so that a law pensioning superannuated laborers, teachers, and state and municipal employees could be passed.

The delegation found that many of the pages and errand boys were working in violation of the child labor law and notified the commissioner of labor. This provoked much feeling among the legislators. The matter was finally referred (*sic*) to the Judiciary committee which reported that the legislature is an extra-judicial body upon which the laws are not binding hence no children are illegally employed at the capital (*sic*).

The Socialists voted for Mr. Berger for United States Senator and voted for him throughout.

In the senate Mr. Rummel introduced a bill providing that all franchises to semi-public corporations be declared null and void, and that ne ones be granted only on an affirmative vote of the people and not longer than for a term of five years.

Measures were also introduced in the assembly to "Establish an Eight Hour Day in Certain Unhealthful Conditions", to "Provide Suction Fans in Grind and Polishing Shops", and an act to "Give the Worker Three Days Notice before Garnishment of his Wages by a Debtor". Mr. Alldridge also brought up a bill to raise the amount of damages that can be gotten for accidental death in factories, upon railroads, etc. from \$5000 to \$10000, and Mr. Berner fathered another asking that in case the employer is sued by the employee for his wages, the former must pay the costs of the suit.

Other bills introduced were those calling for more factory inspectors, for daily inspection of the Milwaukee street cars to prevent the spread of tuberculosis, to establish a municipal ice plant in Milwaukee, to prevent overcrowding of street cars, to amend the constitution and provide the imperative mandate and the recall of officers who betray their constituency. Mr. Brockhausen introduced an anti-injunction bill.

The majority of the socialist measures were killed in the committees. A few including those increasing the number of factory inspectors from eight to fourteen, requiring blowers in factories in which emery or buffing wheels are used, and forbidding the employment of children under fourteen in bands and orchestras, were reported back.

The indications seem to be that few of the socialists bills will become laws. It must be said, however, that the representatives of that party have worked together and arduously, and have been true to their platform and the laboring man. It remains to be seen whether their activity with that of their party will suffice to create a sentiment which will pass their measures at future sessions, or whether the old parties will take the cue and themselves pass these bills taking the credit for them to themselves, and thus rob the Socialists of their just dues.³

It was in the 1905 legislature that the first workmen's compensation bill was introduced by Brockhausen. The bill which incorporated the ideas of the State Federation of Labor was drafted by Legislative Reference Librarian McMarthy. That legislature under the leadership of Governor La Follette, in a regular and a special session, established a railroad commission with power to regulate not only the railroads but other public utilities as well, enacted a civil service

law, a corrupt practices act with an anti-lobby provision, and a forest conservation program--but the workmen's compensation bill was defeated in the assembly. It would be defeated again in the sessions of 1907 and 1909.

Workmen's compensation is based on the principle that industrial injuries are properly regarded as a cost of production and as such should be compensated without regard to a determination of employer liability. The idea is one of social insurance. Regarded this way, workmen's compensation is significant as the first example of social insurance to be legislated in the United States. Germany had a "social security" program as early as 1883, and other European countries followed soon thereafter. Not until the 1930's, however, did the United States adopt comprehensive social security programs.

Before the idea of workmen's compensation could become law, attitudes regarding the appropriateness of this approach to the basic problem had to change. Traditionally an injured worker's proper recourse was to common law. This meant that he had to make a case in court establishing employer liability. But in common law an employer could not be held liable under three basic considerations:

One--if contributory negligence on the part of the worker could be shown, then the employer would be completely absolved of liability; two--if the employer could show that a fellow worker had in any way contributed to the injury, he would again be completely absolved; and three--it was an assumption of the common law that in accepting employment the employee assumed the risks inherent in the job.

Early legislative efforts to obtain justice for the injured worker were aimed at writing laws which in one way or another would deny employers the full benefits of the common-law defenses. The Socialists of Wisconsin called for "an efficient employers' liability law" in their first platform in 1898, as has been noted.⁴ But in 1903 Frederick Brockhausen, secretary-treasurer and legislative representative of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor, in his report to the convention that year, expressed the conviction that further effort at such legislation was inappropriate. His basic argument was that even if laws establishing employer liability should be written, the worker's difficulties in obtaining damages through the courts would be much the same as in the past. Brockhausen suggested

...if anything further is to be presented to the legislature...a demand should be made for a compensation act, a law prescribing certain sums of monies for injuries sustained while at work, including loss of time during disability. The funds, I think, could be collected by pro rata taxation from all manufacturers requiring hazardous labor and building trades employers.

This was the first official expression of the compensation idea. In response, the Federation convention went on record as favoring

such an approach and suggested that the Federation should determine "what adequate damages should pertain".⁵

At the 1904 Federation convention, the subject was again discussed, and this time "...a recommendation for workmen's compensation (be) made part of the Federation's legislative program".

Brockhausen then requested McCarthy to draft a bill and, as has been noted, introduced it in the 1905 legislative session. It specified a low scale of benefits, 33 1/3 percent of wages lost due to injury, with the maximum set at \$2,000 in case of accidental death. The employee was given the option of bringing suit under common law in lieu of accepting the assured compensation. The Federation would hold out for this provision, as well as for compulsory participation by employers, through the 1909 session. The bill was rejected in the assembly after an unfavorable committee report.

In 1907 Brockhausen introduced a similar bill, but it too received an unfavorable committee report and was defeated in the assembly.

At the Federation convention in 1907, a plan for a compensation bill was presented for the first time. It was referred to the executive board with instructions that a bill be drafted for presentation to the 1908 convention. Brockhausen reported accordingly a bill prepared by the law firm of Rubin and Zabel of Milwaukee, which had been doing most of the Federation's legal work. The firm also submitted the opinion that a fixed scale of compensation would be unconstitutional. Attorney Daniel W. Hoan's opinion contending that such a law would be a legitimate extension of the police power was also submitted to the convention. Hoan's reasoning was the same as the premise of a U.S. supreme court decision years later, in 1917, upholding the constitutionality of state compensation laws.

The idea of a compensation law had been widely discussed, and as Brockhausen reported, John R. Commons, on behalf of the American Association for Labor Legislation, and Max O. Lorenz, deputy labor commissioner of Wisconsin, had concepts for a compensation law. Brockhausen proposed that the Federation take steps to bring all interested parties together for concerted legislative action. Several conferences were held, but when the legislature met in 1909, there was no consensus among the interested parties.

A number of industrialists had come to favor some form of compensation law. The Merchants and Manufacturers Association of Milwaukee had called in experts to discuss the matter at a meeting in December 1908. Commons was the principal speaker. He urged the Association to take an enlightened view of the issue. He described the demands for workmen's compensation as "a great movement springing up; not a movement which is fomented by politicians, or instigated by attacks on capital, but which has the precedent and example of all industrial countries." Some kind of reform would be inevitable in Commons' view, and he advised the Association to meet the challenge positively,

"before it becomes a question which arouse- sentiment on account of the horrible examples that are paraded in the press, before class feeling is stirred up." He urged employers to educate themselves and get involved in the legislative process.⁶

While the 1909 legislature did not act conclusively, it took a long step toward a decision by adopting a measure to set up a joint interim legislative committee to study the matter and report a bill to the 1911 session. An industrial insurance committee was thus created. The Federation was represented at the committee hearings by Daniel Hoan; when he was elected city attorney of Milwaukee, Attorney Michael Levin took his place. Brockhausen also spoke for the Federation.

Progressive Republicans dominated the committee's work. They had gained strength steadily during the decade and won control of both houses of the legislature. They had decided to enact a workmen's compensation law and to do it by reporting a bill that would be acceptable to employers and so overcome a major obstacle to passage. The Democrats at this time and for years to come were conservative on social issues and aligned themselves with the Stalwart Republicans.

When the Progressive Francis E. McGovern won the governorship in the 1910 election⁷ and the Progressive strength in the legislature was augmented by 14 Socialists from Milwaukee, the stage was set for passage of a workmen's compensation law. The bill passed the assembly by a vote of 69 to 13 and the senate by 22 to three, and signed by Governor McGovern on May 3, 1911.

Although the law was a compromise on certain provisions, its enactment was a clear victory for labor. Its constitutionality was quickly challenged in a friendly suit and upheld by the state supreme court. Thus did Wisconsin get the first consitutional Workmen's Compensation Act,⁸ the first major achievement in labor legislation in the state.

The law placed the burden of paying compensation directly on the employer of the injured worker. Participation in the system was voluntary for both employer and employee, but nonparticipation would be more risky for both.

Compensation payments were prescribed to fall within the following limits: In case of total disability, a worker would receive 65 percent of average weekly wages; in case of partial disability (e.g., in the case of a worker able to work part time during rehabilitation), a worker would receive 65 percent of wages lost during the period of disability. In no instance would a worker be eligible for total benefits exceeding four times his average annual earnings. For purposes of this computation, limits on average annual earnings were set at a minimum of \$375 and a maximum of \$750.

The Federation had wanted employer participation to be compulsory and the option reserved for the worker of choosing after injury whether to accept mandatory compensation or to seek damages through the courts. The law passed required that the worker make this decision at the time he accepted employment. But the resultant compromise was inevitable since the Progressives controlled the legislative proceedings and the writing of the law. Under the conditions the Socialists refrained from submitting a bill in the 1911 session.

The Socialists and some others, including employers who feared high costs of insuring themselves with private companies, felt that a state insurance system was necessary to make compensation certain.⁹ Since the state constitution would not permit this, the interested parties secured a joint resolution of the 1911 legislature to amend the constitution. Constitutional procedure required the 1913 session to do the same before a popular referendum could be held. The idea of state insurance then was defeated in 1914 by a referendum vote, 165,966 to 58,490.¹⁰

Another provision of the act not dealing with compensation created the Wisconsin industrial commission to administer all labor laws and set up rules and regulations for industrial safety and sanitation.

The Workmen's Compensation Act was one item in a comprehensive program of labor and social measures for which the Socialists agitated and then saw enacted by the 1911 legislature. Some of the other items were a law requiring vocational schools in cities of over 5,000 population and the creation of a state board of vocational education; a law providing apprenticeship training rules; a law establishing maximum hours for women in employment; a state income tax law; a law giving cooperatives the privilege of incorporation; and a corrupt practices act which limited and required public reporting of political campaign expenditures.

The consummation of the program exemplified the character of the Wisconsin Socialists, of their role in state politics, and in the working of the personal union of party and trade-union membership. The stark story of the personal union, though, is told in the fulfillment of a demand in the party's first state platform in 1898 for legislation for the protection of the "health, life and limb" of the workers, a demand that was changed from the idea of court action to a system of compensation by statute and so formulated by Frederick Brockhausen in his report as legislative representative of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor to the organization's convention in 1903.

The fulfillment of the demand was a job to which two men who were members of trade unions and of the Socialist Party devoted themselves for the eight years that followed until the job was done in 1911. Brockhausen worked at the job as secretary-treasurer of the State Federation of Labor and as Social-Democratic member of the assembly representing the Eleventh District, comprised of the 11th and 23rd Wards of Milwaukee. He was on the job in all the legislative

sessions, starting in 1905, required to hammer out the law. His constant partner, Frank Weber, was general organizer of the Federation and Social-Democratic member of the assembly representing the Sixteenth District, 20th Ward, in the sessions starting in 1907, 1909, and 1911. (Weber was elected to subsequent terms representing the Third Assembly District, the 25th Ward.)

A summation of the elements that coalesced into the unprecedented attention given to labor legislation by the 1911 session would include the persistent demands of the State Federation of Labor through many years and the energetic campaigns of the Social-Democratic Party, emphasized by the fact that the Party's winning the city of Milwaukee in the spring of 1910 had compelled both the Republican and Democratic parties to write into their state platforms in 1910 many progressive planks.

The Republican Party called for such labor legislation "as shall place Wisconsin on a level with the most progressive states of nations."

The presence of the 14 Socialists, 12 in the assembly and two in the senate, constituted actual voting power enough in the 1911 session to command attention to the demands of this working-class group. As a result, 22 laws were enacted which were of direct benefit to the working class. With number one of these being the Workmen's Compensation Act, some of the other laws:

Added protection in the construction of buildings.

Established the eight-hour day on public works.

Required the licensing of stationary engineers.

Required that doors be unlocked in factories during working hours.

Imposed on employers the duty of installing and maintaining safety devices.

Improved the conditions of children working in the street trades, such as newsboys and bootblacks.

Required employers and casualty companies to keep records of injuries to employees and to make a monthly report to the industrial commission.

Improved general conditions of child labor

Created the industrial commission to administer the Workmen's Compensation Act.

Closed stores on Sundays, except groceries and meat markets, releasing clerks and other employees from Sunday drudgery.

Provided for the attendance of minors between fourteen and sixteen years of age at continuation classes, evening school, industrial or commercial school, where such exist, and for five hours' allowance of time to minors in employment for school attendance.

Established state life insurance.

About that law that set up state insurance, the *Social-Democratic Vest Pocket Manual* commented:

The bill was introduced by the speaker of the assembly, in an attempt to out-do the Socialists. Whether it is worth anything practically, in advance of the constitutional amendment, is doubtful. However, the commissioner of insurance is understood to be proceeding with the calculation of premiums and formulation of plans to carry out the provisions of the law.

Needless to say, the Social-Democrats gladly voted for this law.¹¹

This law held up without the constitutional amendment and has continued in force to the present time.

A landmark law enacted in 1911 that fulfilled one of the demands in the Socialists' first state platform established the graduated income tax. The groundwork was laid by an amendment to the constitution agreed to by two sessions of the legislature and approved by a vote of the people, the latter done in November 1908. The Wisconsin law preceded the federal legislation which followed amendment to the national constitution in 1913.

The graduated income tax was based on the principle of ability-to-pay. This is the simple fact even though income tax laws have been framed with loopholes.

A table in the *Vest Pocket Manual* of the record of the 14 Socialists in the session of 1911 listing bills introduced, passed, and killed shows the following entries: bills introduced, 199; bills passed and signed by the governor, 52; resolutions introduced, 61; resolutions passed, 16; measures introduced, total 260; measures enacted, 67; measures killed, 192; measures withdrawn, one.

The measures passed were briefly described in the *Manual* in ten classifications as they related to national affairs, general state matters, county matters, political matters and elections, taxation, public utilities, municipalities, labor, lobbyists, and routine business. Forty of the measures dealt with taxation (14), municipalities (14), and labor (12).

Eleven of the tax bills introduced by Assemblyman Edmund J. Berner were recommended by the Socialist regime of Milwaukee--the common council, Mayor Seidel, and the tax commissioner.

Among the bills applying to municipalities were two by Assemblyman Jacob Hahn authorizing Milwaukee to build and repair docks and to build and maintain public lavatories; one by Assemblyman Frank B. Metcalfe granting to Milwaukee submerged land on the shores of Lake Michigan for public parks and boulevards; one by Assemblyman James Vint to regulate factory smoke outside city limits; one by Assemblyman Klenzen-dorff creating the office of city forester; and a joint resolution of Senator Winfield R. Gaylord for a constitutional amendment providing for home rule for Milwaukee. The adoption of the resolution followed bitter debates.

The labor bills included: by Assemblyman Vint, provision for ventilation of stores and factories; three by Assemblyman Weber, licensing of stationary firemen and engineers and inspection of steam engines and boilers, provision for the safe covering of floors and openings in construction of buildings, and setting of hours of labor on public works.

Thus a synoptic account of measures passed. But integral, too, in the story of what the Socialists did in the 1911 session are the bills they tried to get enacted but which were defeated. These were listed in six-and-a-half pages of the *Vest Pocket Manual*.

Socialist bills killed would have legalized municipal dairies, savings banks, legal information bureaus, ice plants, slaughter houses, plumbing, lodging houses and dwelling houses; provided free textbooks; established a Milwaukee branch of the university; established trade schools; authorized counties to own public utilities, establish public libraries, school boards, health, tax, and public works departments; limited liquor and saloon licenses; limited hours of labor for women and children and in mines, tunnels, stamping and smelting works, and in bakeries; provided penalties for automobile speeding.

Socialist joint resolutions killed called for national ownership of the coal industry, trusts, railroads, telegraphs and telephones, and the match industry; popular election of federal judges; abolition of the United States senate; and old-age pension legislation.

Two of the labor bills in the list of Socialist measures killed in 1911 require exposition here because of their vital importance to the functioning of unions. One by Weber would have curbed the spying by private detectives in the workshop and the union hall. The other was a joint resolution by Hahn to stop the issuance of injunctions against unions.

Workers lost their jobs when their activity or sympathy for the union was "squealed" to the boss by hired "snitchers". Workers were sent to jail on testimony, often perjured, of spies during a strike.

Frank Weber expressed the feeling of labor men in 1921 in his report to the State Federation:

During the convention there was a great deal of discussion among the delegates relative to the Labor Spy, smuggled into the trade unions by the employers of labor. It was generally conceded that the labor spy was the most degraded human specimen of society. Employers of labor who apply the spy systems should be exposed as the real perpetrators of evil and should not be recognized as honest men nor as loyal citizens of our country.

The labor spy who joins the union to spy on the membership has been trained by the spy agency, by which he is employed, to apply three systems to destroy the union: First, to attack the honesty and sincerity of the officers; secondly, to present all classes of schemes to deplete the treasury; and thirdly, to advocate radical strikes and criticize the national and international union activities so as to disrupt their local organizations.

The labor spy has been used by the exploiters and enslavers of labor, in all ages, even Christ, the perfect Man, was crucified by and through the lying evidence of a labor spy--Judas Iscariot--who afterward repented and to atone his conscience, hung himself, and if the labor spy of today would repent as he did, we would find one hanging from every lamp post in the state.¹²

Honest unionists tried diligently to clean their ranks, but when one spy was exposed and kicked out, another would take his place. Repeated efforts were made to get legislation. In 1917 the Federation introduced a bill requiring the bonding of private detective agencies and for the listing of their operatives with the secretary of state. It was defeated. The efforts continued, but it was not until 1925 that a bill by the Socialist State Senator Joseph A. Padway¹³ of Milwaukee was enacted that regulated private detectives, private police, and private guards.

The Padway bill "was bitterly fought", the Federation's legislative committee reported, "not only by the detective agencies in Wisconsin, but those of national repute as well, such as the Pinkerton Burns Corporation Auxiliary, etc. The representatives of these agencies were constantly on the job lobbying from the opening of the session until the bill passed its final stage on May 20."

According to the committee's report, "Every method known to the manipulators of legislation, members of the legislature and lobbyists were used to defeat this measure, the statement being made on the floor of the assembly that certain employees of the legislature were also in the employ of the private detectives."

The law required state licensing of private detectives based on approval of local police authorities, defined private detectives as inside shop operatives, and prohibited agencies from maintaining an office in more than one designated city.

Such were the main provisions of the law, but its meaning was exposure--exposure of the espionage agencies which was tantamount to their destruction. This was the intent of the law. It worked. And a successful conclusion to a long drawn-out fight by the Socialists and the unionists was won because the private detective agencies went out of business in Wisconsin as far as their industrial operations was concerned.

The subject of injunctions issued against unions was discussed by Frank Weber in 1900 in his annual report to the State Federation convention. He said,

Within the past few years a new weapon has been brought into play in the disputes between employer and employed, heretofore unknown to the law so far as it has been applied to either the criminal, the political or to the police powers of the state--the now well-known weapon of the judicial injunction, restraining workmen from doing certain things recognized by the codes as perfectly within the lawful limits of their right.¹⁴

The convention instructed its legislative committee to use all possible efforts to get enactment of laws against the "improper" use of the injunction.

The opposition to the injunction was merely in the state of agitation until 1908 when the Federation adopted a resolution demanding that the state legislature memorialize congress to enact a law prohibiting issuance of injunctions in labor disputes.

Efforts to get the legislature to petition congress failed, including the defeat of Jacob Hahn's joint resolution in 1911. In 1913 a bill for a state law was introduced that passed the assembly but was defeated in the senate by a vote of 16 to 10. From then on such bills were part of the Federation's program and were regularly introduced in every session of the legislature and as regularly killed until 1919. In that year the legislative committee reported:

This session your committee was more fortunate. The bill came up for hearing during the session of the Legislative Conference. This was the best showing ever made by labor in the recollection of the committee. The committee recommended the bill and it was passed and signed by the governor and is now Chapter 21, Laws of 1919.¹⁵

The governor was Emanuel L. Phillip, stalwart Republican, who was elected on a platform for "a business administration" in 1914 and re-elected in 1916 and 1918.

Although Socialist political influence declined in the decades following the plateau of 1910-1912, the crusades for social legislation had been started. They would be continued for improvements in workmen's compensation and strengthening of labor injunction legislation and for the establishing of systems for old-age pensions, unemployment compensation, and health insurance.

The state platform of the Socialist Party in 1924 observed, "There are many good laws on the statute books that became laws only because of the presence of an energetic Socialist delegation in the legislature. Socialist ideas have the same suggestive powers in congress."

That platform pledged, as the preceding and succeeding ones did, that "The Socialists will continue their fight until the eight-hour day for industrial workers and insurance against unemployment and against sickness and a pension for the aged are enacted into law."

In their crusade for social laws, the Socialists had set the course and imparted the momentum.

N O T E S

1. *Wisconsin, A Guide to the Badger State*, Compiled by Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Wisconsin (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941), p. 57.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 62. ("Progress has been much more general than retrogression," Charles Darwin wrote.)

3. David King Allen, *The History of Socialism in Wisconsin* (unpublished bachelor's theses, University of Wisconsin, 1905), pp. 65-67. Allen's thesis adviser was Max O. Lorenz, instructor in political economy, who later as deputy labor commissioner of Wisconsin helped in steering the workmen's compensation legislation.

4. Laws affecting railroad workers only were passed in Wisconsin as early as 1875 but suffered repeal or emasculation in the courts. In a 1905 law the assumption-of-risk defense was delimited for employers of railroad workers, and in 1907 the principle of comparative negligence, replacing contributory negligence, was established on the railroads.

5. *50th Annual Convention Wisconsin State Federation of Labor. Souvenir Program* (Milwaukee: August, 1942) (Hereinafter cited as *50th Annual Convention*), p. 31.

6. *Civics and Commerce: Devoted to the Commercial Advancement of Milwaukee* (Merchants and Manufacturers Association monthly publication, December 1908), pp. 10-11.

7. Francis Edward McGovern was appointed an assistant district attorney in Milwaukee County in 1901, reappointed in 1903, elected district attorney in 1905, and re-elected in 1907.

8. Maryland had the first workmen's compensation law in 1902. It was declared unconstitutional in the state courts two years later.

9. *Social-Democratic Vest Pocket Manual: 1912 Campaign*, Social-Democratic Party of Milwaukee County, p. 57.

10. *The Wisconsin Blue Book, 1956* (Madison: State of Wisconsin), p. 246.

11. *Social-Democratic Vest Pocket Manual*, p. 59.

12. *50th Annual Convention*, pp. 34-35.

13. Padway was elected on the Socialist ticket in 1924 to represent the Sixth Senatorial District made up of the 6th, 7th, 9th, and 10th Wards of Milwaukee. He resigned from the senate to accept appointment by Progressive Republican Governor John J. Blaine as a judge of the civil court in Milwaukee. He was elected to the judgeship in 1926 from which he resigned in 1927.

Padway served as executive counsel to Daniel Hoan when Hoan was elected mayor in 1916. Padway was general counsel for the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor from 1915 and general counsel for the American Federation of Labor from 1938 until his death in 1947. He died of a heart attack while addressing the AFL convention in San Francisco.

He had resigned from the Socialist Party and joined the Progressive Party of Wisconsin when it was formed.

14. *50th Annual Convention*, p. 35.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

CHAPTER VII

THE CRUSADES FOR SOCIAL LAWS

(PART TWO)

Social insurance against the hazard of sickness was demanded by the Wisconsin Socialists in their first state platform of 1895. "Free medical assistance and a free supply of remedies to all." But such programs were given little consideration in the United States although the industrial countries of Europe with their agitating Socialist movements were already developing state health insurance systems.

What may be called the first crusade in Wisconsin for old-age pensions originated in the Federated Trades Council of Milwaukee, as the State Federation of Labor in 1902 proposed it. The Trades Council introduced the resolution which the Federation convention that year adopted, mandating "special instructions upon our legislative committee to take hold of this question and to spare no effort in making an active campaign in bringing this question before the people and show to them the absolute necessity of the government taking hold of this matter and establish a system in which old age and invalid pensions by the state will be enacted."

In 1905 Frank Weber in his annual report as general organizer of the State Federation wrote under the heading, "Old Age Pensions", a statement that bespoke the humanitarian he was as it explained the unionist and Socialist objective. Weber wrote:

As this subject was brought to the attention of the last legislature, it therefore becomes necessary to inform the organized workers of the state the reason why this question is of vital interest to the welfare of all the toilers.

In the old days, when machinery and large factories were scarce, and small shops general, an old man could work at his trade in his own shop and make a living, even if he could not do as much as a younger man, but those days are gone never to return. The days of the small shop have about passed. In a modern office or factory, if one cannot do a full day's work, he is dismissed and a younger and more active person put in his place. These changes in the business world make it imperative that we provide for the aged.

It is our duty, not only to protect ourselves, but to compel others who would not otherwise do so to protect themselves from becoming paupers when the infirmities of age overtake them. This can be done by paying an old-age pension raised by taxation. No organization is more able, or under more obligations to do this than the state. The people make the state, and the state is morally bound to take care of its people.

The counties have their poor farms, supported by a direct taxation, where the aged can go and become labeled as paupers. Would it not establish a higher standard of civilization, a more humane system of society, if they could live with friends.

We cannot deny the fact that it is very unpleasant and humiliating for a person who has supported himself and paid taxes for forty or fifty years to be degraded as a pauper on account of business reverses, sickness or some other similar misfortune; be compelled to leave all his friends and relations and take up his abode at the county poor farm, to spend the balance of his days among strangers; and, finally, to find his last resting place in the potters field.

A pension of \$200 a year would make it easy for an old person to find a home among his old associates and friends. This would cost but little, if any, more than the present system of maintaining poor farms, and it would be much better, for it would not degrade its recipients as does the present system; it would also prevent unscrupulous county officials from entering into deals that rob the taxpayers.

These pensions could be paid from the general fund or they could be paid from a special fund raised by a poll tax and used for no other purpose. If it should not, according to the most careful estimates, exceed \$2.00 per year for each person 21 years old or over, or \$4.00 per year for each man, providing the men pay for the pensions of the women.

There are none of us who is not willing to acknowledge that one of the greatest causes of misery and sin is selfishness; an old-age pension would be a step toward abolishing selfishness, for then every producer of wealth would be assured a comfortable living in his old age.

Again, an old-age pension would not be degrading, for a person who labors and pays taxes in a state for forty or fifty years has certainly earned the right to the support of the state in his declining years.¹

The idea of a system of old-age pensions was years ahead of its time, which was still in the offing, but its novelty did not stop serious agitation for it, and in session after session bills for old-age pensions were introduced in the legislature. The crusade won out finally with the enactment in 1925 of a bill introduced by Senator Alva E. Garey, a Progressive Republican representing Rock County.

This first Old-Age Pension Act empowered county boards to establish old-age pension plans with state aid. Entitlement required attainment of seventy years of age, and benefits were not to exceed \$1.00 a day.

It was to take another dozen years before a national old-age pension system was created by the Social Security Act. And that only belatedly happened a quarter century after Victor Berger had introduced in congress the first old-age pension bill.

In 1912 Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Party joined the Socialists in demanding a health insurance program be placed in its platform. Then, as the party's presidential nominee, Roosevelt spoke out for it. The reiterated Socialist demand as stated in the state platform that year was for "the establishment of a national insurance bureau for life, fire, sick benefit and unemployment insurance". The whole Progressive national platform read like a Socialist document, but this was the demand under the rubric "Social and Industrial Justice" for which the Progressives pledged "to work unceasingly in state and nation for: ... The protection of home life against the hazards of sickness, irregular employment and old age through the adoption of a system of social insurance adapted to American use."

In that same year, 1912, the American Association for Labor Legislation set up a social insurance committee to define needs and to promote the idea before state legislatures. The Association developed a model health insurance bill and by 1917 had succeeded in introducing it in 12 states.²

The Labor Legislation lobby also persuaded the American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association, and the National Association of Manufacturers to establish health insurance study committees. Some prominent governors endorsed the idea, including Al Smith of New York in 1919. But by then a turn-around in the mood of the country had taken place with American involvement in the World War and in the subsequent reaction against "socialistic" ideas set off by the Bolshevik Revolution.

State health insurance would have had tough going in any event. Samuel Gompers opposed it from the start and withdrew from the Association for Labor Legislation on the issue. The AMA's house of delegates voted unequivocal opposition in 1920, although Dr. Alexander Lambert, president of the AMA and a member of the AALL, had supported such insurance.

In Wisconsin the State Federation of Labor had a bill introduced in the 1917 legislative session which resulted in the creation of a special interim study committee. But the climate of reaction was too chilly; the Wisconsin Medical Association continued to fight against state health insurance, and labor's crusade faltered. The labor movement leadership then shifted its concentration to the cause of unemployment compensation.

Socialist concern for the plight of the unemployed was expressed in immediate demands of the party in the first national and state platforms. The national platform in 1898 called for "The inauguration of a system of public works and improvements for the employment of a large number of the unemployed, the public credit to be utilized for that purpose."

The state platform endorsed the demand as one of the "measures tending to palliate the evils of our present system of society", to which the Wisconsin Socialists added immediate "employment of the unemployed by the public authorities (county, city, and state)".

The capitalist curse of unemployment with its consequent privation for workers and their families was constantly talked about in party and union meetings, especially during hard times. A comprehensive program for dealing with it under the present system was long time in development.

In 1909 Frank Weber said, "It becomes the duty of the trade union to aid its unemployed if it does not want to be blamed for being indifferent to its unemployed and suffering members." In 1914 Weber in his annual report to the State Federation of Labor stated, "With the ever growing state of unemployment, the time is close at hand when municipal and state governments will be bound to take up the matter of introducing a system of insurance which must protect the workers against the untold sufferings and misery of unemployment."

By 1919 the Federation had worked out the first approach to a definite plan which was set forth in a pamphlet entitled "The Next Steps for Wisconsin". First, to appraise the dimensions of the problem, the pamphlet asked that the Wisconsin industrial commission compile statistics on unemployment. Then the Federation stated its position:

We believe it is incumbent on the state to pay an out-of-work allowance to those who are unable to find employment. This should be a temporary measure to be superseded by a permanent system of unemployment insurance, when the facts collected by the industrial commission as provided for in this program, shall appear to warrant such a system.

Wisconsin already has compulsory insurance against accident or death of the wage earner, in two forms--

accident compensation and mothers' pension. The principle is right, but the amounts paid under both are entirely inadequate and should be raised generously. We should not let another session of the legislature pass without applying for the same principle to sickness, old age and unemployment.

Unemployment insurance should be taken care of as previously indicated--temporarily at least by the dismissal wage; sickness insurance by legislation along the lines laid down by the American Association for Labor Legislation; and old age insurance either through annuities subsidized by the state, or through a straight pension system.

Such measures as these will do much toward making life worth living, and toward reducing the odds against which the worker is battling.³

At the next convention of the State Federation in 1920 at La Crosse, Jacob F. Friedrich, a Machinists' union delegate from Milwaukee, introduced a resolution calling for unemployment compensation. Professor Commons discussed the need for such legislation in an address to the same convention. Henry Ohl, Jr., general organizer and president of the Federation, appointed Friedrich as a Federation representative to work with Commons and J. J. Handley, secretary-treasurer of the Federation, to draft a bill.

Ohl and Handley were Socialists and so was Friedrich. Ohl had been elected head of the State Federation of Labor in 1917 to succeed Weber who had declined re-election. At the time Ohl, a member of the Typographical Union in Milwaukee, was a Socialist member of the assembly. Handley, a Machinist, was elected secretary-treasurer of the Federation in 1912 when Brockhausen retired. At the time Handley was superintendent of the bureau of street sanitation in the Socialist administration in Milwaukee. Friedrich had been elected business representative of the Machinists' district council in 1919. He had joined the Socialist Party the year before.

Friedrich was to be intimately associated with the cause of unemployment compensation in the years that followed--in the ten-year crusade for a state law and, after a law was enacted, he was involved in its administration and improvement.

The first unemployment compensation bill in the nation was introduced in the 1921 session of the Wisconsin legislature. Its sponsorship by the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor represented the thinking of the Socialists and contravened the position of the American Federation of Labor.

The AFL was to stick to its opposition to unemployment insurance (and health insurance) until the nation was mired in the "Great

Depression" of the thirties. The opposition was based mainly on fear of government, a fear stemming from actions taken through the years by the executive and judicial branches against labor in disputes with employers. Even though Samuel Gompers, AFL president, and a majority of the AFL executive council opposed unemployment insurance, many of the AFL union locals and other unions favored not only unemployment insurance but also other forms of social insurance as well.⁴

The 1921 bill sponsored by the State Federation was the product of intensive discussions among Friedrich, Commons, his associates, and his students. There were differences of opinion as to how the insurance should be funded. The bill that was drafted placed the entire cost on the employer, based on the premise that unemployment compensation should be figured as a cost of production, like workmen's compensation. Employers, the controllers of jobs, should be responsible for the stability of employment.

But to the Socialists and other social-minded people, the administrative details of the bill were secondary to its objective of setting up an insurance system for the unemployed. Victor Berger introduced a bill in the house of representatives in 1928 for a federal unemployment insurance system that would have been paid for by equal contributions of the wage earners, the employer, and the government.

Both the state and the national bills were ahead of their time. Berger's wasn't reported out of committee. The Federation bill ran into fierce opposition from the employers who charged, among other things, that such legislation would drive industry out of state; though defeated, the bill received considerable support in the senate.

The Federation sponsored similar bills in every session of the legislature for the next ten years until the country was deep in the Depression and millions of workers were thrown out of their jobs. Then the 1931 legislature decided that something should be done. It had before it three unemployment compensation bills: a Federation bill introduced by Robert A. Nixon of Bayfield County, the Progressive floor leader of the assembly; one by Socialist Assemblyman George A. Hampel of Milwaukee; and the third by Progressive Assemblyman Harold M. Groves, University of Wisconsin economics professor. The decision was to appoint an interim committee to study the matter, to hold hearings throughout the state, and to report to a special session later in the year. Nixon and Groves represented the assembly on the committee, and Jack Handley was a citizen member.

Governor Philip F. La Follette called a special session in November. The Groves bill which the interim committee recommended was amended and passed. Labor's representatives accepted the final bill as an alternative to no legislation at all. La Follette signed it into law on January 28, 1932.

"This law is the first of its kind in the United States and may, notwithstanding its weaknesses, be pointed to as breaking new ground

in the field of legislation and as another pioneering achievement of labor in Wisconsin.... (it) forms the basis for a future comprehensive act. This is in line with the traditional trend of social legislation." So did the legislative committee of the Federation comment in its report to the convention in 1932.

The law provided that contributions by employers were not to begin until July 1933, the benefits to begin two years later. Because of continuing bad business conditions, the effective dates were further postponed, the first contributions to become payable from July 1, 1934 and the benefit provisions to become effective July 1, 1936.

On August 17, 1936 the first unemployment compensation check ever paid in the United States was handed to a Wisconsin worker. He was Neils B. Ruud, an employee of the Brock Engraving Company of Madison. Paul A. Raushenbush, the state unemployment compensation director, signed and presented the check which was for \$15, the weekly maximum at the time.

The 1935 legislature amended the law to conform to the newly enacted national Social Security Act in order to receive federal administrative funds, and on November 27, 1935 Wisconsin became the first state to have its unemployment compensation law approved under the provisions of Social Security.

When the Wisconsin Unemployment Compensation Act was enacted in 1932, Friedrich was appointed one of three labor representatives on an advisory committee to work out the administrative details for the application of the law and to make recommendations for improvements to succeeding legislative sessions. He continued to serve on the advisory body until May 6, 1974 when he resigned after forty-two years. He resigned at the same time as a labor adviser on the workmen's compensation board, after thirty years of service.

A historic figure in Wisconsin, Jacob Frank Friedrich died in 1978. He was born of German parents, Frank and Barbara (Wolf) Friedrich in Perjamos, Hungary (now Periam, Romania) on January 31, 1892. He came to Milwaukee when he was thirteen and "bached it" with his father who was the first of the family to emigrate. He attended public grade schools, first at Fourth and Galena Streets, the Prospect Avenue School at Maryland, where he graduated from the eighth grade in 1907. Then, as he told Robert W. Wells, writer for *The Milwaukee Journal*:

I went to what was called the School of Trades--now it's Boys Tech--and went there about a year and a half to learn the machinist's trade.

In 1907 and 1908 we had a very bad depression here. Nationally, the Panic of 1907. Scrip was being given out instead of money. Many of the stores in accepting scrip would downgrade it so you wouldn't get your full amount.

It got to be pretty hard for my father so I quit school and went to work. I must have been about 15.

I went to work for the old National Brake and Electric Company, part of Westinghouse, which made air brakes for freight cars. I didn't stay long in one place. I worked in many different shops.

I worked at the International Harvester in 1909 or 1910. We worked 13 hours a night, five nights a week.⁵

Then Jake "hit the road", working for the next couple of years as a journeyman in shops in Omaha, Indianapolis, and Chicago. He returned to Milwaukee in 1913 where he joined Machinists Lodge 66, the union he belonged to for the rest of his life.

One year later he was elected to the "organizing committee of 66". He was active in a big drive that increased the Milwaukee membership from 500 to about 4,000 in 1916. A series of strikes climaxed the organizing campaign for the eight-hour day which were partially successful in that the work week was cut from 55 to 52 1/2 hours. Friedrich told this writer,

One of the greatest thrills I ever got in organizing was the victory we won at the shop where I was then employed, the Milwaukee Die Casting Company. We got our hours reduced from 55 to 44 with the same weekly pay. This meant an increase in our 40 cent an hour rate to 50 cents, an unheard of wage increase in those days.

The next step in Frederick's union career was his election as secretary of the District 10 board in 1915. In 1917 he was elected president of Lodge 66 and was re-elected in 1918.

Jake Friedrich joined the Socialist Party in 1918. The following year he was fired from his regular job because his name was published in a list of delegates to a Chicago protest meeting in behalf of Tom Mooney.

A promotion in his rank in the union came in 1919 when he was elected business representative of District 10, a position he held for ten years. He was the only business representative then, there being only two lodges in the district, 66 of Milwaukee and 250 of West Allis. In 1922, another year of hard times, called the postwar depression,⁶ District 10 found itself in a financial hole, and Friedrich got a night-shift job back in the shop and carried on his business representative duties afternoons and Saturdays. This went on for nine months.

The continued chronology of Friedrich's activities reveals a spectrum of service in the labor movement and civic affairs. In 1921 he was elected recording secretary of the Milwaukee Federated Trades Council where he served through 1934; it was not a full-time job in that period.

He played a leading part in founding the Milwaukee Labor College in 1921, a night school for workers in which he taught classes and which was the forerunner of the School for Workers at the University of Wisconsin.

Mayor Hoan appointed Friedrich to the Milwaukee sewerage commission in 1923 on which he served for forty-three years and of which he was chairman from 1932 until he resigned in 1966.

In 1929 Friedrich relinquished his job as business representative of District 10 to become labor editor of *The Milwaukee Leader* when the paper was reorganized. He also covered the city hall and stayed with *The Leader* until 1935 when he was elected general organizer of the Federated Trades, a salaried position. From 1945 to 1951 he was regional director of the American Federation of Labor. He became secretary-treasurer of the Federated Trades in 1951, then full time, and continued to serve after the AFL and CIO central bodies merged as the Milwaukee County Labor Council in 1959. Friedrich was elected president that year and held the position for ten years.

Throughout his career, Friedrich played a leading role in workers' education, a field in which Wisconsin was the leader, in truth, the sole pioneer in America for the first several decades of this century. Workers' education was part of the culture of the state that enacted the labor and social laws we have discussed--a contributory factor in the achievement of the legislation.

"The first recorded official reference to the desirability of a workers' education program in the state" was a resolution presented to the 1905 convention of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor by Victor Berger. So wrote Ernest E. Schwartztrauber, director of the School for Workers of the University of Wisconsin.⁷

Berger was chairman of the convention's committee on education. The resolution, which was adopted, recommended that "suitable lectures be arranged in the meeting hall or the lodge room from time to time. Whenever advisable they may be connected with an entertainment and the ladies and grown-up children shall be specially invited to attend."

But it was not until the winter of 1921-1922 that workers' education became a reality. The Federated Trades Council then founded the Milwaukee Workers College. The council elected a board of trustees of nine members, seven of whom were Socialists including Friedrich, Ohl, and Handley. Friedrich taught classes, the first of which were held in the evenings in the city hall's civil service rooms provided without charge.

In 1925 Friedrich worked with Ohl and Handley and Professors John Commons, Selig Perlman, Elizabeth Brandeis, and others in continual conferences which led to the establishment that year of the School for Workers of the University of Wisconsin. It was to be the only school of its kind in America for some twenty years. Friedrich was a member of the labor-faculty advisory committee of the School for thirty years from its inception.

Governor Gaylord A. Nelson appointed Friedrich to a nine-year term on the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents in 1960. Friedrich was the first trade unionist to become a regent in Wisconsin. He served as president of the board from 1962 to 1964.

Although he had had little more than a grade school education, Friedrich began his tenure as a University regent with a degree in his possession. In 1955 he had been awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from the University, a presentation that originated from a recommendation by the faculty.

Among the thousands who attended the degree-awarding ceremonies that day in June of 1955 was a man who like Friedrich had been born in Hungary of German parents. A man about the same age as Jake, he had come to Milwaukee in 1910 and became an active Socialist and the best-known tavern-keeper in town and Jake's friend and pinochle-playing companion on Tuesday nights in later years. He was Wendelin Kraft. He told this writer about the affair, the first college event he had witnessed.

"I saw Jake up there on the platform in that cap and gown and all those intellectuals and heard him speak. A kid from Hungary like me...."

"I cried. The tears ran down. I never cried before."

The honors bestowed on Jake Friedrich were symbolic of the ultimate success of the crusades for labor and social laws in Wisconsin.

N O T E S

1. *50th Annual Convention Wisconsin State Federation of Labor. Souvenir Program* (Milwaukee: August, 1942) (Hereinafter cited as *50th Annual Convention*), pp. 33-34.

2. The American Association for Labor Legislation was formed in 1906 at a meeting in Baltimore of the American Economic Association "upon the inspiration of Professor Ely", in the words of John R. Commons. Richard T. Ely, head of the economics department at the University of Wisconsin, was also head of the Economic Association. Commons was made secretary of the Labor Legislation group, and he named John B. Andrews, his associate, the executive secretary. Professor H. W. Farnam of Yale University was chosen president. Headquarters were at Madison.

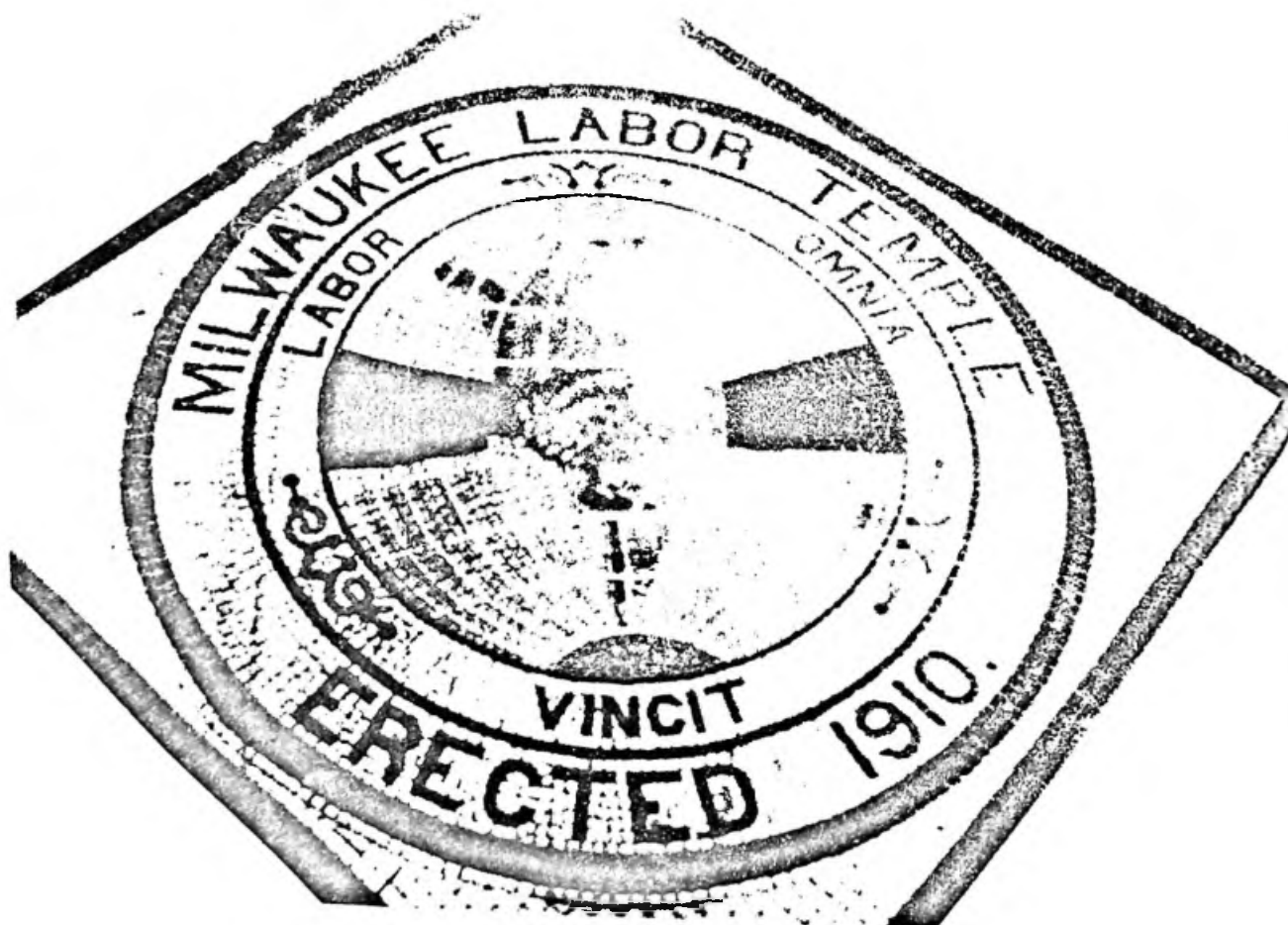
3. *50th Annual Convention*, p. 37.

4. Philip Taft, *The A. F. of L. in the Time of Gompers* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), pp. 364-366.

5. *The Milwaukee Journal*, May 8, 1972.

6. The railroad shop crafts in Milwaukee joined a nationwide strike against wage reductions that lasted two and a half months in 1922. Other Milwaukee unions struck for the same reason that year.

7. Ernest E. Schwartztrauber, *Workers' Education, A Wisconsin Experiment* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1942), p. 17.



CHAPTER VIII

THE MILWAUKEE LEADER

The most successful and the longest-lived English Socialist daily newspaper in America was *The Milwaukee Leader* launched in 1911. And it was the most successful labor daily.

The Socialist press included five English dailies in 1912 at the peak of the movement's growth. They were, besides *The Leader*, *The Chicago Daily Socialist*, *The New York Call*, *The Alarm* of Belleville, Illinois, and *The Daily Register* of Lead, South Dakota. There were then also eight foreign language Socialist dailies, preeminent of which was *The Jewish Daily Forward*.¹

The Milwaukee Leader was a labor paper. So it was from its beginning and through its life as a Socialist paper. But the meanings of words change along with their referents--the things the words referred to. Labor papers today that make up the labor press are different from what they were in the past. The labor press of the past spoke for a labor movement composed of political and social elements along with the economic and included people who were not members of trade unions as well as those who were.

The labor press today is a standard term. It is a usage shared by members of unions, professors of labor economics, and the United States department of labor. But the referent of the labor press differs nowadays from what it was in the days of *The Leader*. In the same category, the referent of labor and the labor movement--which are interchangeable terms--is different from what it used to be. The labor movement today--organized labor--is made up of local and international unions, city central bodies, state federations, the American Federation of Labor--Congress of Industrial Organizations. And the labor press today consists of the publications put out or endorsed by the various organizations in the trade union structure. Thus, the term would correspond more literally with its referent if it were the union press or the trade union press or the labor union press.

The labor press today includes no daily newspapers.

It should be noted that the labor dailies differed from the rest of the labor press of the past as well as from that of today in that they were published for the general public, in direct competition with the regular daily press, and usually for political and ideological purposes.

The Milwaukee Leader was Victor Berger's paper. As much as an institution can be said to be the creation of one man, *The Leader* was that. Berger founded it and kept it going for the eighteen years that were left of his life. Assuming all other circumstances were the same, it would be difficult to imagine *The Leader* coming into being and fulfilling the destiny it did without Berger.

Victor Berger was one of the founders and leaders of the Socialist movement in America; in Milwaukee and Wisconsin he was the leader. All the favoring elements and tendencies were present in Milwaukee, it is true, but it was Berger's political genius that fused them and developed them, inspired and guided the Socialist movement in the city and state. He was the complete political leader: boss, strategist, organizer, fund-raiser, propagandist, speaker. He was respected, admired, liked, and he was a vote-getter. He had his fault-finders and enemies, too; this is correlative to supporters for political leaders.

Berger built a political machine in Milwaukee which Daniel Bell said "was to be the solidist rock" for American Socialism, his devotion to Socialism being "unquestionable".²

What Berger and the Milwaukee Socialists created was more than a political machine; it was a political-economic movement, a people's movement, although of local scope.

To work with the movement in Milwaukee, Berger built a Socialist press. He started it in 1893 when he became editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, a tri-weekly German newspaper, and changed it to the daily *Wisconsin Vorwaerts*. He was to be a Socialist editor and writer for the rest of his life.

For the ten confident years between 1901 and 1911, Berger expounded on Socialism in editorials in the the weekly *Social-Democratic Herald*. The mounting success of the party led to the founding of the daily *Milwaukee Leader* and the building and equipping of a newspaper plant in Brisbane Hall. The daily was launched in 1911.

The Socialist upswing that culminated with the publication of *The Leader* was marked by a number of noteworthy events. *The Herald*, the organ of the national party, had been moved from Chicago to Milwaukee in 1901. It was immediately adopted by the Federated Trades Council as its official organ and became a powerful factor in winning votes among the workingmen unable to read the German *Vorwaerts*. Each election in the decade thereafter marked a new high for the Socialists. In 1898 and 1900 they had received support only in the purely German wards. Their total vote (for mayor) in those years was 2,430 and 2,585. But in the election of 1902, after *The Social-Democratic Herald* came to town, the vote jumped to 8,453 and continued to grow.

Following his election to congress in 1910, Berger wrote in his by-line editorial in *The Herald* on December 3 that "the battle won November 8th in Milwaukee has an international significance".

The tide in their affairs was taken at the flood by the Milwaukee Socialists. The decision to publish a daily paper was voted two months after the November election at the annual meeting of the Milwaukee Social-Democratic Publishing Company. Plans for the financing of the daily were announced in the "Progress Edition" of *The Herald* on February 11, 1911. A goal of \$100,000 was deemed necessary to assure success. Bonds were sold in \$10 denominations,

paying four percent interest, The funds were needed to pay for new presses and other equipment.

A new home for the paper was already under construction and would be completed in the summer of 1911. This was Brisbane Hall, designed to be the home of the Social-Democratic Party, the trade unions and the Socialist press. The name of the building commemorated Albert Brisbane (1809-1890), the early American Socialist who introduced the doctrines of Charles Fourier in the United States in the 1840's.³ The building was the property of the People's Realty Company which had purchased the site in 1909 when the Socialists formed the company. The building and lot were valued at \$75,000.

A winter publication date for the daily was decided in August when almost half of the bond issue had been subscribed. A wire service contract was negotiated with United Press in October. When the first edition of *The Leader* was published, \$85,000 had been raised. But in the next eight months, less than \$5,000 in bonds were sold, and the campaign ended--more than \$10,000 short of the original goal. Nearly \$15,000 of bonds were bought by 27 local unions in Milwaukee and by unions in 21 states. Socialist branches in Milwaukee and in 37 states bought a total of \$7,750.

On September 21, 1911, under the headline, "Brisbane Hall Now Great Labor/ and Socialist Center," *The Social-Democratic Herald* reported:

The new home of the Socialist party, Socialist press and labor unions is now finished and practically all rented to first-class tenants.

The income from the rents now collected each month assures a profitable investment for all who have purchased shares in the People's Realty Company.

The PRC is incorporated for \$40,000, divided in shares of \$25 each. More than \$35,000 worth of these shares of the PRC have been sold, leaving only between four and five thousand dollars worth still to dispose of.

The building is an up-to-date, four-story, fireproof, brick, cement and iron building. It is located at Sixth and Chestnut streets, one of the really growing business centers of Milwaukee. The foundation is built to support an eight-story building when necessary. Real estate is increasing in value in this part of the city every day and from all indications will continue to do so in the years to come.

Brisbane hall is an inspiration to all progressive working people and Socialists who visit Milwaukee when they go through it. They are delighted with the quality, location, and fitness for the grand purpose for which it came into existence--viz.: The home of the Socialist party, press and labor organizations.

The present income from the rents indicate that it will be a good dividend payer from the start.

If you have a little money to invest, you accomplish two desirable things by purchasing one or more shares of the PRC stock. You make a good investment and at the same time use your money where it will be doing excellent work for the cause of the toilers.

Bear in mind that this building was planned as the foundation and the home of the daily paper which will soon make its appearance, to voice the demands and aspirations of the advance guard of the army of labor on the American continent.

We have tried to build everything pertaining to the Milwaukee Socialist movement, solid from the foundation up. The \$5,000 needed for the balance of the shares unsold in the PRC is now desired to remove the last barrier to our peaceful occupation of Brisbane hall, which is the home of labor in every sense of the word.

From this building an influence will radiate which will carry hope to millions of toilers in all parts of the world. You are all interested in the movement of which Brisbane hall is a practical and useful monument. Let us hear from you with a check for at least one \$25 share of stock, if it is possible.

With this preliminary work finished we will be free to lend all our efforts and energies to the task of launching the daily paper in Milwaukee.

The Milwaukee Leader was born December 7, 1911. The essence of the *Leader* as a Socialist paper was exemplified by the first issue, which carried on its front page a three-column cartoon of a ship labeled "Milwaukee Leader", flying the flag "Socialism", full sails billowing, shooting down a sinking ship identified as "Capitalism and the Old Parties". The caption was "ARRIVED!"

The lead story, under the banner head "Gas Records Reveal Extortion for Benefit of Wall Street", started a crusade against the gas monopoly and its high rates. It reported that Congressman Berger had introduced a bill to nationalize industrial combinations that were more than 40 percent monopoly; the story also noted Berger's bills to nationalize the railroads, express companies, coal mines, and telegraph and telephone companies, and his bill to provide for old-age pensions. There were congratulatory messages from Eugene V. Debs and other national Socialist leaders and from Socialist Mayor Emil Seidel and City Clerk Carl D. Thompson under the headline, "Officials See Hope of City in New Paper".

There was a column on page ten, "Work and Workers", by Carl Sandburg. The women's page carried a column of woman's suffrage news. The well-known boxing promoter, T. S. Andrews, edited the sports page.

The typographic tone, with splashes of red headlines on the front page, was sprightly. A copy of the paper cost 1 cent, the going price.

On the editorial page, under the headline, "*The Milwaukee Leader*", by Victor L. Berger", appeared this manifesto:

The rank and file of the Milwaukee Social Democracy got tired of the hateful misrepresentations of the Socialist administration and of Socialism generally, made by the capitalist press and particularly, by *The Milwaukee Journal*.

The rank and file issued the mandate that the weekly *Social-Democratic Herald* be turned into a daily. And the leadership of the party and the management of the paper obeyed the real leader, the rank and file--and the result is THE MILWAUKEE LEADER.

And a leader it will be, THE MILWAUKEE LEADER--undoubtedly the best equipped and foremost labor paper in the English-speaking world. There is nothing like it in the country, and there is nothing like it in Canada, England or Australia....

The most important fact in Milwaukee is the resolute men and women who are determined to lead the world into new channels...

The distinguishing trait of Socialists is that they understand the class struggle--that they have the social conscience--and that they boldly aim at the revolution because they want a radical change from the present system....

THE SOCIALISTS ARE THE ONLY PEOPLE ON EARTH WHO ARE PURPOSEFUL. THEY ARE THE ONLY ONES IN THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD WHO CAN DISPENSE WITH COMMONPLACE PHRASES AND SLIPPERY WORDS. THE SOCIALISTS ARE THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO PRESENT A CLEAR-CUT, DEFINITE SOLUTION....

It is of course mainly to the discontented that THE MILWAUKEE LEADER will address itself. The LEADER expects nothing from such as think the capitalist system is good enough for them and should not be changed...

We shall preach no class hatred. But we will preach class consciousness and class conscience six days in the week.

THE MILWAUKEE LEADER is to be serious and aimful,
but at the same time sunny and cheerful...

THE LEADER is to enter the house of proletarian like
a ray of sunshine, like the greeting of the coming genera-
tion.

But at the same time, and above all, THE LEADER will
also tell the news of the day.

An ear on the front page of that first issue boasted, "We start with a
circulation larger than any other Milwaukee Daily." There were five English
and four foreign language non-Socialist dailies at the time.

While *The Leader's* regular run would be eight pages, the first was six-
teen with a normal variety of advertising, including three large ads from
the department stores, Schuster's, Gimbel's, and the Boston Store.

The new Socialist daily would find the capitalist competitive world very
palpable from the beginning. The competition would be ceaseless and compre-
hensive, overt and covert, throughout the paper's existence. Here are a few
glimpses from the start. "Unionist," *The Milwaukee Journal's* anonymous
labor columnist, wrote on the day *The Leader* was born, "We have seen that
the Socialists, from within the labor movement . . . (have) persistently done
their utmost to break down American trade unionism in order to build up
Socialism."

In its first week *The Leader* found it necessary to send out "flying
squads" to protect its newsboys from being beaten up.

Before the spring election in 1912, *The Milwaukee Sentinel* printed
American and red flags in color on its front page and called on the voters to
choose between them. Seidel was defeated, and the Socialists were set back
by a so-called fusion of the Democrats and the Republicans. And Berger was
defeated for re-election in the fall of that year.

Still the beginning was auspicious. A column on *The Leader* edi-
torial page, December 22, 1911, under the boxed head "Leader Circula-
tion Notes", by A. W. Mance, reported:

The Milwaukee Leader finds a good market in Boston and
also in San Francisco. It is in demand in Jacksonville, Fla.,
and bundles have been ordered and are on their way to Alaska.
There is no city in the continent where its voice is not heard.

* * *

The large number of requests from daily and weekly papers
from all parts of the country to put them on *The Milwaukee Leader's*
exchange list shows that editors are taking notice.

* * *

The united purchasing power and patronage of the friends of
The Milwaukee Leader amounts to half a million dollars a week.
Learn to use this power in your own interests.

A three-column promotion ad in the same issue carried the headline "Six O'Clock Edition" over the message "The six o'clock edition of *The Milwaukee Leader* is absolutely the most complete newspaper published in the City. Full Stock and Market Reports". The average daily circulation for the *Leader's* first month was 31,874, according to the first sworn statement published January 6, 1912.

After the 1912 spring election, the going became difficult. Many advertisers boycotted *The Leader*, deficits mounted, and on May 7, 1912 the price of the paper was raised to 2 cents although the other papers were still a penny.

In many ways *The Leader's* first year, with its ups and downs, foretold what the following years would be; each would be marked by struggle and crisis and transient triumph.

On its first anniversary, an editorial review declared, in part:

The Leader has forced other newspapers to print news they previously ignored....

The Leader has consistently opposed the police-capitalist hierarchy with its third-degree methods and its clubbing of workingmen.

These and many other things *The Leader* has done because it is the newspaper of the workers and is dedicated to the belief that those who do the useful work of the world should obtain its fruits.

In 1916, on the paper's fifth anniversary, Berger wrote in an editorial:

The Leader has lived through the hardest years of its existence.... *The Milwaukee Leader* is convinced that when the time comes to decide whether the people of the United States shall own our country, or a few men shall own it, the verdict of the American people will be for themselves. The verdict will be for Socialism and to lead in that fight is the mission of *The Milwaukee Leader*.

Even rougher days lay directly ahead; these resulted from the Socialists' opposition to America's entrance into the war in Europe in 1917. On October 3rd of that year, *The Leader* reported, "*The Milwaukee Leader* has been barred from the second-class mailing privilege in a letter sent to Mr. Berger by Third Assistant Postmaster General A. M. Dockery. An appeal has been wired to Burleson (the Postmaster General)." Berger explained that the "authorities object to the general tendency of the paper as being against war. In case *The Leader* should be suppressed it will keep its plant and even the organization intact--as far as possible--and start *The Leader* again the day after peace is declared." The lead editorial in the same

issue, under the heading, "*The Leader* to Continue Its Fight for Freedom", declared, in part, "And we repeat that the war was caused by the struggle between Great Britain and Germany for commercial supremacy of the world's trade. The Social Democracy of the world stands for and demands peace. If this be treason, let them make the most of it. We are here ready to answer any charge."

The next day *The Leader* reported that Berger said the paper would continue to publish city editions; that the Federated Trades Council voted to investigate the denial of the mails to *The Leader*; that Mayor Hoan had protested in a telegram to President Wilson; and that many New York papers had criticized in their own editorials the government's attempt to suppress *The Leader*.

"*The Milwaukee Leader* was not suppressed by act of law," an editorial in *The Leader* of October 9 stated. "The grand dukes in Washington preferred no charges; considered no defense; harkened to no plea. They simply killed the Socialist paper 'on account of its tendency....' But the Socialist press will live and freedom will win."

Some of the local department stores withdrew their advertising, reported in a page-one story on October 12, under the headline, "Do Large Advertisers Wish Readers of *Leader* to Know Patronage is Not Wanted?" The readers numbered 25,000 according to F. W. Rehfeld, business manager of *The Leader*. Lost by the denial of second-class mail rights were 15,650 out-of-town readers.

A variety of pressures was brought to bear upon *The Leader* and its advertisers. Oscar Ameringer played a role in this crisis which he recalled in his autobiography. "Victor Berger wired me one day that a very serious situation had developed in Milwaukee, and that my presence was needed," Ameringer wrote. He described a boycott instigated by "the crusaders for democracy":

The Fuel Administration gave business concerns who advertised in *The Leader* to understand that if they didn't withdraw their patronage, they couldn't secure fuel. The Food Administration hinted to breweries who still employed *The Leader* as an advertising medium that unless they ceased they might experience difficulties in securing malt, hops and sugar. A wellknown (*sic*) motorcycle manufacturer was told that unless he put pressure on a certain hardware dealer to withdraw his advertising from *The Leader*, the motorcycle he supplied to the government might not pass inspection.

Ameringer reported in his autobiography of a visit that he and Victor Berger had made one Sunday morning to Oswald Jaeger, head of a well-known bakery of that name.

He said that when Jaeger as a young man was still living in Germany Jaeger had become a Social-Democrat. Jaeger was undoubtedly very proud

of his long time affiliation, for he was very proud of his collection of party dues-books that testified to his fifty years of continuous party membership. Ameringer said that when the Milwaukee Socialists launched *The Milwaukee Leader* Oswald Jaeger contributed a thousand dollars to its support. Nevertheless, devoted friend that he was, he had cancelled his advertising in *The Leader*.

Ameringer then goes on to report that Jaeger told them, "My god, I can't help it. I can't advertise in our own paper." Opponents to the paper had told him that if he continued to advertise in it, they would refuse him flour, sugar, and coal that he had to have to run his bakery.⁴

The Milwaukee Journal, in a front-page editorial, fired a violent attack on *The Leader* on December 11, 1917, which charged that persons who subscribed to *The Leader* and those who advertised in it were directly encouraging disloyalty. *The Journal* asserted:

It is barely possible that some of Milwaukee's business men do not know what *The Leader* is, or how hostile it is to the nation's cause. It is the Milwaukee organ of the German Socialist party.... *The Leader* stands forth branded as a public enemy. No loyal citizen should continue to support it.

The Leader reacted the next day. In a front-page interview, Berger said *The Journal* was guilty of printing misrepresentations and falsehoods. A five-column boxed editorial, also on page one, declared, in part:

To the man with average intelligence it must be clear, after reading the first few lines of that article (in *The Journal*), that it was dictated by envy, jealousy, and greed, masquerading under the cloak of patriotism. *The Milwaukee Journal* wants to eliminate a dangerous competitor in the journalistic field of Milwaukee. After using the powers of a friendly administration in Washington to injure *The Milwaukee Leader*, the *Journal* now openly advocates a boycott on the part of the subscribers and a blacklist of the advertisers against the *Leader*...

The Milwaukee Leader is not disloyal to the government of the United States. As a matter of fact, it is infinitely more loyal to the government and the people of the United States than *The Milwaukee Journal* ever was.

The Milwaukee Leader, however, does not agree with the present administration and was opposed to the war before it was declared, and it now pleads for an honorable peace for all the nations involved.

Three months later *The Leader* reported that Berger and four other Socialists had been indicted under the Espionage Act of 1917 because of their opposition to the World War. The trial in Chicago began December 9, 1918. Five weeks later the defendants were found guilty. Judge Kenesaw M. Landis imposed upon each a sentence of twenty years in Leavenworth. On January 31, 1921 the supreme court reversed the decision of Judge Landis, and all proceedings against the defendants were dropped.

Beginning in August 1918--ten months after *The Leader's* second-class mailing rights had been withdrawn--delivery of mail to *The Leader* was stopped; these were stamped "Undeliverable under Espionage Act" and returned to the senders. A *Leader* editorial of October 19, 1918, under the headline "In the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave", stated:

The following cannot reach us by mail: money due on subscriptions; money for new subscriptions; money for advertising; mail from our paid correspondents; mat and feature service; change of address...

Since October 3, 1917, when the mailing right of *The Leader* was revoked, we have lost \$70,000 in subscription money and \$50,000 in local and national advertising.

Now, mind you, no court has found us guilty of any crime. The tremendous loss of \$120,000 was the result of the act of one man, the Postmaster General of the United States. Plutocracy is safe, but democracy is being murdered.

The Leader's tribulations with the government had no apparent adverse effect on the political fortunes of the Socialists. In the spring election of 1918, Mayor Hoan was re-elected (he had won the office in 1916 after six years as city attorney), and the Socialist representation in the common council increased from 12 to 13.

In the fall election that year, Berger was returned to congress, getting 17,819 votes to 12,259 and 10,539 for the Democratic and Republican candidate respectively; and the Socialists carried the entire county ticket and elected 11 state legislators in Milwaukee County. One year later, after the house of representatives had refused to seat Berger, he won again in a special election, this time defeating a fusion candidate with the Teutonic name of Henry Bodenstab, 24,367 votes to 19,567. Again Berger was denied admission to congress and again he was elected. He was finally seated on December 5, 1923 without a dissenting vote after winning the election in November 1922; this occurred after the supreme court's reversal of his conviction.

After the hectic war years, the socialist movement in America began a down-swing that gradually but inexorably pulled the Milwaukee



MILWAUKEE JOURNAL PHOTO

Newspaper delivery truck for *The Milwaukee Leader* parked in front of *The Milwaukee Leader* offices. Undated photograph circa 1925. Reproduced by permission of *The Milwaukee Journal*.

The city desk and news room of *The Milwaukee Leader*, the daily newspaper of the Socialist Party in Wisconsin. Both the newspaper and the party headquarters were located in Brisbane Hall which later was razed. Undated photograph circa 1928. Reproduced by permission of *The Milwaukee Journal*.



movement down with it. Berger himself was returned to congress by the Fifth District in 1924 and 1926. David Shannon in his history of the Socialist Party in America analyzed Berger's success and concluded that when Berger was elected in 1910 the Milwaukee Socialists believed that there would also be Socialist members of congress from other districts but that by 1924 they no longer held to that hope. By 1924 the Milwaukee Socialists were realistic enough to recognize that they were fortunate in having even one Socialist in congress. They could see that it was the strong municipal political machine that had elected Berger. They were, according to Shannon, more gloomy about social democracy.⁵

Berger was aware of the down-swing. On May 27, 1924, six weeks before the national convention of the Socialist Party endorsed Robert M. La Follette's Progressive candidacy for president, Berger made a speech in congress calling for the formation of a new party.

"We must have a new party with new ideas," he said and pledged the Socialist Party's willingness "to cooperate with any and all other organizations striving for the same aims and objects--however different their point of view--provided they are consistent and sincere."

An editorial in *The Leader* July 4, 1924, explaining the Socialists' endorsement of La Follette's candidacy, said this was done "with the expectation that an American labor party will be formed next January.... The La Follette candidacy is part of the process of welding the elements together."

Nearly 5 million votes were recorded for La Follette and Burton K. Wheeler, the candidate for vice president; it was the largest third-party vote in the nation's history. La Follette swept Wisconsin, but it was the only state the ticket carried. But the American Labor Party was a mirage. Among the realities that occurred after the 1924 election, La Follette became ill with pneumonia in January, and he died June 18, 1925. He was seventy.

In 1910, in *The New York Times* interview previously mentioned, Berger was asked:

"Do the La Follette Republicans aid in the growth of your movement?"

"No," said Berger grimly, "we help them--not directly, but by enabling them to view us with alarm. They have been pointing to us and saying, 'If you don't take us you'll get them.' For the last sixteen years it has been La Follette's favorite trick to threaten the other faction with us. La Follette is personally an honest man, but he is a politician whose great object in life is La Follette."

That was the expression of an attitude in the formative years of the Wisconsin Socialists and Progressives when their ideological

premises were distinctly different. But many of their immediate objectives coincided, and as these were attained their courses began to run together.

And happenings that were not of their own doing affected the Wisconsin Socialists...and changed their milieus. These included the world wars, national depressions, and national elections. The changed milieus resulted then in changes in common attitudes.

Berger and La Follette were both exponents of opposition to the first World War; this was a merger of their political courses.

The headline "LA FOLLETTE IS DEAD" ran across the front page of *The Leader* the day after the senator's death. The all-cap banner was in 96-point type, letters 1 1/3 inches high, compared to the normal 72-point number one story headlines. In a two-column box, Berger wrote under his by-line:

Robert M. La Follette, the Great American, has died.

Robert M. La Follette has more constructive legislation to his credit than any other statesman of the present generation....

As United States Senator, La Follette has for 20 years been the recognized leader of forces in their fight for clean, efficient government....

Robert M. La Follette was a great man, and his name will shine brightly in the history of our country.

Berger's eulogy to La Follette, delivered in congress on February 20, 1927, told how the Socialists of the nation endorsed La Follette's presidential candidacy "after the Socialists of Wisconsin had silently endorsed him for senator by not putting up a candidate against him".

Berger continued to advocate a new political alignment. On October 24, 1927, five days after becoming national chairman of the Socialist Party, Berger announced a plan for a new party. On May 19, 1928, in another speech in congress, he said:

The time is ripe for a political realignment... I hope that the Progressives will soon muster enough courage to stand by their guns and become a nucleus for a new and larger movement... I am confident that we shall very soon have a new political party based upon what the Socialists, Farmer-Laborites, and the Progressives desire, and united to oppose the autocracy of the present-day capitalism.

In the last campaign in which Berger was to be engaged--in the fall of 1928--he appealed to the Progressives for continued support,

saying that the election of 1924 had shown that Socialists and Progressives could work together, and he called for the formation of a new party. The principal constituents of the new party, he wrote in a *Leader* editorial on October 24, 1928, would be the farmers, small businessmen, and workers who needed to emancipate themselves from the domination of big business.

In November Berger running for re-election to congress received the largest vote of his career, 40,536, but he trailed the Republican William H. Stafford by 729 votes. In the spring election that year, Daniel Hoan was successful in his race for mayor; but the Socialist candidates for comptroller, treasurer, and city attorney were badly beaten, and in the aldermanic elections the Socialists lost ground, winning only 6 of the 25 seats.

Berger died on August 7, 1929, twenty-two days after he had been struck by a streetcar at Third and Clarke Streets. He was sixty-nine. His death was reported in newspapers over the world. *The New York Times* carried nearly a full-column editorial on him. Arthur Brisbane wrote about him in his column "Today". President Hoover sent a letter of condolence to his widow. Cablegrams of sympathy were sent by the British Labor Party and the German Social Democratic Party.

In Milwaukee, Berger's name was in the headlines for days; the newspapers carried biographies, details of the funeral plans, Berger sayings and anecdotes, and tributes from prominent persons. Berger's body lying in state in the city hall was viewed by more than 75,000, *The Milwaukee Journal* reported.

Oscar Ameringer delivered the eulogy.

The lead editorial in *The Leader* on the day following Berger's death, under the heading, "Victor L. Berger", ran four inches over into the second column. Here are excerpts from it:

The dominating force of this man's personality had made him a leader; many looked to his leadership as a hope of better things, an improvement in the relations of man, a more just balance between power and human need. And now the chapter of history in which he was a prominent figure is ended by death.

Victor L. Berger was one of the leading figures, and the last of the important figures, in the experiment of Socialism in America....

The war ended with the Socialist Party rent in two. It had lost many of its strongest men...all feel the dint of pity, the surge of human sympathy, with those who loved a man against whose private life, as a husband and father, no word was ever spoken.

The day Berger died was the date of a regular meeting of the Federated Trades Council. It was also the birthday of Frank Weber; he was eighty. The proceedings of the meeting show that the following memorial and resolution was adopted "by a rising vote":

MEMORIAL

Today, August 7, 1929, Brother and Comrade Victor L. Berger, a former delegate to this Federated Trades Council from Newspaper Writers Local Union No. 9, sank into that solemn sleep which in this world knows no awakening.

Our Brother and Comrade, Victor L. Berger just fallen in the pathway of existence, will long live in the hearts of all who knew him. He was kind and loving; good and genial. Beneath his quiet exterior were stored precious gems of useful knowledge. The aim of his life was the elevation of humanity, mentally and morally. He was generous to the poor and a friend of the oppressed. With charity for all, he held ill-will for none. Those who knew him best, loved him most.

During his life he lived and labored for his fellow-men and sister-women. He sided with the weak and poor against their oppressor. He was a brave and tender man and in every storm of life he was oak and rock. He was a worshipper of liberty, a friend of the oppressed. He believed that happiness is the only goal; reason the only torch and justice the only worship.

Weber undoubtedly authored the memorial.

Any account of *The Milwaukee Leader* from its beginnings until August 1929 must also be an account of Victor L. Berger. The lives of this Socialist daily and this remarkable man for the years of their coexistence were inextricable. But the *Leader* as an institution was not subject to the abrupt mortality of a man; its death would take longer.

NOTES

1. Protagonist of the needle trades union, the Yiddish language *Forward* was founded in 1897 in New York by Socialists and unionists to defend the American Federation of Labor against the dual unionism of Daniel De Leon's Socialist and Labor Alliance. The paper still lives as an ally of the labor movement. In its time *The Forward* also opposed the Industrial Workers of the World and later helped thwart the Communists in their effort to take over the apparel trades unions. *The Forward's* circulation reached 225,000 in the 1920's.

2. Daniel Bell, "The Background and Development of Marxian Socialism in the United States," *Socialism and American Life*, Donald Drew Egbert and Stow Persons, editors (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 263.

3. Albert Brisbane's son, Arthur (1864-1936), newspaperman who worked on Charles Dana's *New York Sun*, Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*, and William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal*, became on the latter the highest paid U.S. newspaper editor of his time.

4. Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken, The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1940), p. 317.

5. David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America, A History* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 181.

CHAPTER IX

THE TERMINAL PERIOD OF THE SOCIALIST DAILY

Changes in *The Milwaukee Leader* were being planned by Victor Berger before his sudden death. Troubled by the paper's debt of \$130,000 and feeling too old to carry the load any longer, Berger asked the party to buy his shares and refinance the paper; otherwise he would be forced to sell to outside interests. On July 3, 1929 a special meeting of the executive board of the county central committee of the Socialist Party was held in Brisbane Hall. The minutes record that:

The meeting was called for the purpose of discussing with Comrades Hoan and Berger various propositions relating to the re-organization of *The Milwaukee Leader*.

After a lengthy discussion it was moved that "The County Central Committee of the Socialist Party endorse the efforts of Comrade Hoan and other Socialists to re-organize *The Milwaukee Leader* for the purpose of continuing said *Milwaukee Leader* as a Socialist daily paper representing the cause of the working class.

All the board members voted for the motion, five at the meeting and two afterward.

A new holding company, Publishers, Incorporated, was formed and a drive started to raise \$100,000 to pay Berger and Miss E. H. Thomas about \$38,000 for their shares in the Social Democratic Publishing Company and to promote the paper.

The drive for funds and support of the Socialist newspaper would continue and falter in the next decade. Progress reports in the minutes of the Party's county central and the labor central body--which were circulated respectively among the ward branches and the local unions--were through the years promotional and repetitious. The paper's supporters were talking to themselves--in diminishing numbers.

The "drive" for Publishers, Incorporated was at the outset particularly interesting. A special meeting had been called by the county central committee for August 28, 1929 to receive a report from Thomas M. Duncan on the various plans for reorganization of *The Leader*. Duncan, who was a state senator, could not attend the meeting because of a call of the house in the legislature. The minutes of the meeting said that "special notices had been sent...to all delegates, branch secretaries, and public officials.... Comrade (Otto R.) Hauser, who is manager for the Drive, made a general statement showing the possibilities of success." It was moved that special notices be sent again for the next meeting, which was held September 11, attended by ninety members. At this meeting:

Comrade Duncan made a lengthy report on the Financial Condition of *The Leader* covering the past three years. He also outlined the necessary work that would be required to put this new plan across..... Comrades Hauser, Hoan and (Paul) Gauer made short talks on the necessity of united action. After considerable discussion from the floor, it was moved that the County Central Committee endorse the drive for Stock in Publishers, Incorporated.

Significantly, at the same meeting so comprehensive in its representation of Milwaukee Socialism, Duncan took up Berger's theme of the need for a new party that would ease up on ideology and seek to appeal to more people. The minutes reported that "Comrade Duncan pointed out the advisability of taking steps to have the party name changed on the ballot and explained how this could be done."

Just a week before, as the principal speaker at the Labor Day picnic in Washington Park, Duncan had urged "the formation of a third party that would embody Socialists and Progressives and would develop a fighting spirit for the preservation of individual liberties." *The Leader* reported that 50,000 people crowded the park; that the trades council's general secretary, Weber, was master of ceremonies; and that Attorney Joseph A. Padway, general counsel of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor, backed Duncan's stand. Padway spoke of the "necessity of the people getting together in a new political alignment, a progressive liberal labor party in which both Progressives and Socialists could join forces and bring about the things the people were after. Men of the type of Senator Norris, La Follette, the late lamented Victor L. Berger, Mayor Hoan, and so on, as against the Dohenys, Falls, and Daugherty, and big business crooks."

The counsel for a new party was accepted by the Socialists as a whole--more than six years later. Had the counsel been accepted when it was presented in 1929, and had Berger lived, would then a perdurable Progressive Party have been possible? Would *The Leader* live today? Some believed so. One who did was Elmer A. Krahn who managed the business and advertising departments of *The Leader* for many years. In an interview with this writer in December 1964 Krahn expressed the opinion that if Berger could have lived five or six years longer--to lead political developments and to continue running the paper--*The Leader* would have overcome.

What the Duncan proposal did do in 1929 was shake up the Party and set off a bitter debate that reverberated for many months in meetings of the county central and all the ward branches. The Socialists opposed to the change won out. One of their first reactions was to sound a warning of "capitalist lies". On October 7, 1929 a statement by the "County Executive Committee, Socialist Party" ran across the top of *The Leader* editorial page, under the headline "Hold your Balance". It began:

When we read rumors in the capitalist papers about new labor parties, about changing party names, about fusions of farmers, union labor and political groups with the Socialist Party, it is a safe rule not to listen to these rumors or to believe them until we read the truth in our own papers. It is the rule of the capitalist papers to

knife the labor movement whenever there is a chance to do so. For that reason they will always add a pound of falsehood to a grain of truth. That is why we have to have a press of our own.

The statement concluded: "Hold your balance, comrades, and don't swallow the dope of the capitalist papers." The county central committee adopted the statement at its regular meeting, October 9, 1929.

Endless discussions were held in the party councils during the early months of 1930 on "plans for the new party". The methods of debate included the preparation by the executive board of a plan for "presenting this matter impartially before the branches".

A special meeting of the county central committee was held on April 10, 1930 at which the entire evening was devoted to discussion of "the proposed new Party". Among those in favor were Emil Seidel and Leo Wolfsohn then news editor and later managing editor of *The Leader*. Also reporting in favor of the new party were "Kleist and Zumach". Named in the minutes of the meeting as opposed to the new party were "Landberg, Quick, Strehlow, Brodde, George Hampel and Sheehan".

They continued the discussion at the next meeting where they invited "the Committee of Trade Unionists" to present "their arguments for the New Labor Party". At the meeting on April 22 "Comrade (J.F.) Friedrich, being the only person present of the Trade Unions, started the discussion, showing the advisability of starting a Labor Party".

The upshot of all those discussions was expressed by the last sentence of the minutes for April 22: "Most of the talks, however, were opposed to the idea of starting a new Labor Party on the basis of individual memberships."

Duncan resigned from the executive board of the Socialist Party in March 1930 and resigned from the Party two years later. However, he continued as the moving spirit in the affairs of Publishers, Incorporated as long as the company lasted.

The unions' support of the "Drive" in behalf of Publishers, Incorporated was typically told in the trades council minutes for November 6, 1929:

Board reported that Sister Maude McCreery appeared before the Board and requested credentials to visit the local unions to explain the reorganization and the new policy of *The Milwaukee Leader*. Board recommends that credentials be granted for a period of ninety days. Concurred.

Board recommends that the stock we hold in the Social Democratic Publishing Co., also the bonds and notes, be converted into stock in Publishers, Incorporated. Concurred.

The minutes added that the board offered a resolution (which was adopted) calling for more support by union members of "the labor press". "A number of

delegates spoke on the reorganization and the new policy of *The Milwaukee Leader* and urged all delegates to support the reorganization campaign which is being carried on."

The shares held by Berger's widow and Miss Thomas were paid off by the new company in February 1930 with \$20,000 in cash and a pledge of \$5,000 more to be paid in April.

E. J. Costello succeeded Berger as editor. A newspaperman primarily, he had been previously with the Associated Press and the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*. Costello imparted a flair to *The Leader*. He brought Heywood Broun's column, "It Seems to Me", to the front page in February 1930. He started a series of "open letters", the first addressed to President Hoover in December 1930, that ran across the top of page one, over the nameplate. The "letters" with Costello's by-line, set in large boldface, directed comments on various matters to Albert Einstein, Governor Philip La Follette, Clarence Darrow, Norman Thomas, and others, and addressed acerbic messages to *The Milwaukee Journal* and *The Milwaukee Sentinel*.

When Costello left after a few years, Leo Wolfsohn, who had worked with Berger for sixteen years, took over the editorial management. Wolfsohn told this writer in 1935 that Costello was "too good" for *The Leader*, meaning that he was able to earn much more than *The Leader* could afford to pay him. John M. Work was the chief, and usually the only, editorial writer of *The Leader* from 1917 until the very end of the paper. In the reorganization, after Berger's death, J. F. Friedrich resigned his position of business representative of the Machinists union to become labor editor and city hall reporter of *The Leader*; he worked for the paper until 1935 when he was elected general organizer of the Federated Trades Council.

A sortie for funds wherever they might be found in the nation was tried in 1931. The character of the effort seems to be indicated by *The Leader* report on March 2 of that year, a "Special to *The Leader*", with a Washington dateline on page one. The two-column headline was "Development of Strong Working Class Press is Planned in Washington". A photograph cut of Berger ran with the story:

In Washington where he had twice been expelled from congress for his courageous defense of the rights of the masses, the name of the late Victor L. Berger was cheered to the echo by a dinner audience that filled the large auditorium of the National Press Club here.

The occasion was the formal launching of the Victor L. Berger National Foundation.

The organization that is designated to strengthen and expand *The Milwaukee Leader*, so that in later years it may become the nucleus of a string of similar newspapers throughout the country, was enthusiastically started on its career by nearly 300 of the former friends and admirers of the Milwaukee editor and congressman.

Mrs. Meta Berger, who made the principal address of the evening, was

tendered what amounted to an ovation when she finished her dramatic tale of the struggle to keep *The Leader* alive during the years of its persecution by the federal government and since.

She told a story that brought the diners crowding around her with pledges that they would support the establishment of a national working class press.

The other highlight of the evening was the address of Morris Hillquit, New York. In ringing words he pointed out the necessity of an organized liberal, progressive, Socialist and working class movement in America, to join with the movement in Europe which is seeking to push back the tide of another and more disastrous world war....

In the absence of Clarence Darrow, president of the foundation,... Mayor Daniel W. Hoan presided as toastmaster....

The first objective, Mayor Hoan declared, is a fund of \$1,000,000 to be raised this year, with which promotional plans for *The Leader* are to be carried out.

He read congratulatory messages from Gov. La Follette, Henry Ohl, Jr., W. T. Evjue, Miss E. H. Thomas and the Victor L. Berger Y.P.S.L.....

Cash and pledges for the foundation totaled nearly \$4,000.

The foundation did not last long and proved of small help to *The Leader*.

New members flocked into the Party in Milwaukee during the early thirties, and in the spring of 1932 the Socialists won their biggest municipal victory since 1910, electing besides the perennial Mayor Hoan, the city attorney, the city treasurer, and twelve aldermen. A deal with two maverick "nonpartisan" aldermen made possible the election of a Socialist as president of the Milwaukee common council, and control of the council.

The Leader rode with the temporary upswing of the Party. Its circulation grew in the first five Depression Years, 1930 to 1934, from 31,000 to 48,000. Annual deficits declined in this order from 1930: \$96,000, \$53,000, \$26,000, until the paper almost broke even in 1933; and in 1934 it showed a profit of \$26,000. In 1935 the deficits set in again. The total of the paper's debts had mounted to \$550,340 in 1936 of which \$36,700 was owed in back pay to employees, according to "The Milwaukee Leader Statement of Profit and Loss" in 1937, a report now among the Daniel W. Hoan papers on file with the Milwaukee County Historical Society.

The paper had never stopped going to the unions for support in stock sales campaigns, subscription drives, and promotion of advertising. In 1935 *The Leader* returned to the union wells for outright financial donations; the buckets drew something up but not enough. The trades council's minutes for that year expressed growing alarm for the paper. On February 5 the council, acting on a request from the Socialist Party, appointed a delegate to "a joint committee to broaden the interest of *The Milwaukee Leader*". On June 5 the

council adopted an urgently-worded resolution endorsing "the campaign for the raising of funds and the enlarging of the circulation of *THE MILWAUKEE LEADER* now in progress" and urging "all labor unions in Milwaukee to give fullest measure of cooperation possible to this campaign".

The minutes of August 21 record that the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor had circularized its affiliates "urging assistance to *The Milwaukee Leader* who has valiantly taken labor's side in all its disputes". On September 15 "Bro. (Al) Benson of the Unions Committee for the Promotion of *The Milwaukee Leader* spoke on the necessity of greater effort on the parts of the unions for the promotion of *The Milwaukee Leader*."

On October 16 a recommendation by the executive board that \$2,000 be donated to *The Leader* was ordered submitted to a referendum of the affiliated unions, in accordance with the council's constitution. "Great stress was put on the priceless value *The Milwaukee Leader* has been in all of labor's struggles. Unlike the other daily papers of Milwaukee, *The Milwaukee Leader* has always stated labor's side truthfully," the minutes stated. While the referendum was in progress, the trades council called a conference of officers of all the unions with the executive board and officers of the council to discuss ways and means of supporting *The Leader*. The referendum carried by a vote of 417 to three.

Concurrently, the Party was, of course, carrying on its ceaseless efforts to help the paper. Through all the years, from the early days of the Party, the Milwaukee Socialists used myriad ways to get funds. The taking of collections was a regular order of business at political rallies. Their big money-raising affairs were bazaars, winter shows, masked balls, Christmas parties, and picnics--of the last-named, the major event was the annual state picnic. How the Party operated to help *The Leader* was specified in a program adopted by the county central committee on April 10, 1935. On the executive board's recommendation "in reference to *The Milwaukee Leader* and the raising of a Maintenance Fund" the county central decided:

1. That the County Central Committee...endorse *The Milwaukee Leader* Subscription and Financial Aid Drive and that Socialist Party and all the members thereof cooperate in all phases of the campaign to the end that success will be assured.
2. That the goal as set by the Board of Directors of *The Leader*, together with the Executive Board be,
 1. 10,000 new subscribers.
 2. \$10,000 maintenance fund to be raised through the Socialist Party.
 3. \$10,000 maintenance fund to be raised by the unions.

4. Organization of the buying power of the Party and the Unions so that advertising to which *The Leader* is entitled can be increased by at least \$50,000.
3. That we conduct another Bazaar in the early part of 1936.
4. That the Bazaar Committee composed of Comrades Al. Benson, Carl Hampel, and William Tesch be again appointed with full power to act.
5. That we conduct a state picnic, the date of which is to be determined later.
6. That the state picnic be held as part of *The Leader* Drive, and that all the profits ensuing from this picnic be turned over to *The Milwaukee Leader* Booster Drive.
7. That the picnic committee be Comrades Al. Benson, Carl Hampel, and William Tesch.
8. That a sub-committee be appointed--2 members of the county executive board and 2 members of the state executive board. This committee to have supervisory powers and to work with the Bazaar Committee and the Picnic Committee.
9. That \$9,000 of the profits of the 1935 Bazaar be set aside to be used by the committee in promotional and other preliminary work in connection with the Bazaar and Picnic.

By 1936 the Socialist Party had given up its column on the ballot in Wisconsin and had become a part of the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation whose candidates were Progressive. In its first test in the city elections in Milwaukee, the Federation failed to hold the offices of city attorney and treasurer and lost control of the council. The re-election of Hoan was hardly a Federation triumph. In the 1936 fall elections in which state-wide Progressive candidates led by Governor Philip La Follette won; the Federation-endorsed Progressive candidates for congress in Milwaukee, who were Socialists, lost.

Meanwhile, *The Leader* sank deeper in its financial quagmire, so deep that in 1937 there was no prospect of raising new capital without first wiping out the old corporate debts and interests of the original stockholders. Duncan, chairman of the board of Publishers, Incorporated, attempting to accomplish this, had accumulated rights to a majority of the old securities. He and others, including Krahn, then business manager of the paper, were looking for new capital in order to take over ownership of the physical plant and to assume the firm's current indebtedness. They devised a plan for wiping out the old bonded debt through a foreclosure by bondholders.

But all the efforts to raise capital to continue *The Leader* as a Socialist paper failed. Continuance of publication as a liberal paper was arranged, however, by a deal between Duncan and three incorporators of a new company. This will be treated in the next chapter.

While the doom of *The Leader* as a Socialist daily must have been clear to the comrades at the time (as it certainly is in retrospect), there is no neat and comprehensive wrap-up of the end of the Party's prime association with the paper and the events that immediately preceded it. There is no final note in the CCC "Minutes" to mark the event. However, some particulars of the transfer of ownership are contained in a "statement of facts" submitted to the executive board of the Milwaukee county central committee by Otto Hauser, the Party's representative on the board of directors of Publishers, Incorporated. The statement was dated February 8, 1939.

The long, futile search for capital was laconically reported by Hauser in this conclusion of his statement which is in a letter included in the CCC "Minutes":

The terms of this agreement were concurred in by the Board of Directors of Publishers, Inc., after admitting unsuccessful attempts to open other sources of financial help, particularly organized labor and the *Jewish Daily Forward*, both of whom had been implored.

That, in one way of saying it, is why *The Leader* ceased being a Socialist paper--a reason that is part of the larger explanation being developed in this history.

CHAPTER X

TRANSITIONS TO THE END OF THE LABOR DAILY

The story of *The Milwaukee Leader* after it was no longer the Socialist organ is continued here because it was still connected with the Party--with its devolution. The paper's policy was to operate unchanged, it was said; the paper was still read and supported by the Socialists; the paper would continue to be through transformations to its finish a labor daily.

Coincidental with the floundering of *The Leader* late in 1937 was a switch in the operation of *The Milwaukee Sentinel*. The management of the latter was transferred from Paul Block to William Randolph Hearst, who was then publishing the afternoon daily, *The Wisconsin News*. This move left some of the executives of *The Sentinel* at liberty. Three of them negotiated with Duncan and worked out a changeover in the ownership and control of *The Leader*. The three were Paul A. Holmes, who had been executive editor of *The Sentinel*; A. R. Bower, former *Sentinel* advertising director; and Morris G. Matthews, former *Sentinel* assistant circulation director. They incorporated as the Wisconsin Guardian Publishing Company in January 1938 and, after accomplishing foreclosure of the old company's bonds raising some new capital, took over publication of the paper on April 20. Holmes was editor; Bower, advertising and sales director; Matthews, circulation manager; and Krahn, publisher. And the paper was renamed *The New Milwaukee Leader*.

Stock in the new company was issued in connection with bonds in which the three former *Sentinel* men made personal investments. It was the talk of the town that they had picked up *The Leader* by buying some notes from the Marshall and Ilsley Bank. *Business Week* magazine in a feature on the Milwaukee daily a year later stated that "three ambitious newspapermen...bought *The Leader* for a shoestring."¹

According to Otto Hauser's "statement of facts", mentioned in the previous chapter, the contract between Duncan and the former *Sentinel* executives provided that

the Wisconsin Guardian Publishing Co. was to pay for the acquisition of *The Milwaukee Leader* free from incumbrances a total of \$135,000 of which amount \$85,000 was to be paid in cash on certain stipulated dates and the balance of \$50,000 in stock in the Wisconsin Guardian Publishing Co., and if the stock could not be agreed upon, then the \$50,000 could also be paid in cash. The total of \$135,000 was computed to be inclusive of moneys already expended by one Glen Roberts presumably for said Wisconsin Guardian Publishing Co. and with the consent and approval of said Thomas M. Duncan for the purchase of certain notes due to Marshall Ilsley Bank and the Grand Father Falls (Paper Mills) Co. and certain other liabilities totaling approximately \$13,000.

What emerges from Hauser's account is that Holmes and his partners acquired *The Leader* by buying the notes owed to the bank and that Hauser was not

happy about it. The latter is indicated by his language; for example, Glenn D. Roberts was a well-known Madison attorney and Progressive Party leader.

"*New Leader* Given Cordial Welcome; Support Pledged," a front page headline reported on the new paper's second day of publication. One column cuts of Mayor Hoan and Governor La Follette accompanied their best wishes. Statements from 22 other city and state figures ran the break-over on page three. Among these were: "The improved typographical appearance of *The New Milwaukee Leader*, its very obvious efforts to cover the news accurately, independently, fearlessly, and completely all augur well for its success..." from Henry Ohl, Jr., president of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor and a printer by trade; and "...Every laboring man should be proud to be a subscriber to this labor newspaper," from Peter T. Schoeman, president of the Building Trades Council.

A rather bitter memoir of the change in the paper is that of John M. Work who had been in charge of the editorial page since 1917. "On St. Patrick's day in March 1938, *The Leader* lost its soul by ceasing to be an out-and-out Socialist paper," he wrote in his unpublished autobiography.²

In the morning of that day Armin Tews of the news room told Work, as he was putting in a new desk in Work's office, that it belonged to "some folks who were taking over the paper". Work recalled:

There had from time to time been rumors that the paper would be sold, but, as it had not happened, we of the editorial staff naturally discounted them. A man by the name of Paul Holmes, and a few other men, took over the paper.

Otto Hauser, who was a member of the Board of Directors and was also Mayor Hoan's Secretary, told me that Tom Duncan made the deal that disposed of the paper, without the other members of the board knowing anything about it. I never knew the details.

I had known all along that the paper was more or less in financial straits. I could tell that, if in no other way, by the fact that there were so much back wages coming to me.

The new regime said it was not going to make any changes in the policy of the paper... I stayed on, knowing that I could still do some good for the cause, and not knowing but the Socialists might again get control of the paper.³

The new owners ran the paper for a year. They made an intense effort to increase and improve local news coverage and to make better use of their wire services. They acquired the Milwaukee rights to *The Chicago Daily News* foreign service. In the syndicate field *The New Leader* became the first client of movie chitchat written by a newcomer to the business named Hedda Hopper.

And *The New Leader* continued to be a labor daily--in the sense that it supported and sought support from the contemporary liberal-labor alignment

in Milwaukee. This was illustrated by a front-page story on August 23, 1938 under the headline, "Federation Units Back Campaign to Boost *New Leader*", with the deck, "Battle lines of FLPF Drawn at Rally in Auditorium". The story ran a full column on page one with nearly a column break-over on page two. Here is part of it:

A fighting campaign led by a fighting press--such was the goal laid down by the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation at Milwaukee's greatest pre-primary political rally last night in the Auditorium.

Each speaker stressed the prime importance of building *The New Milwaukee Leader* as a powerful voice of the liberal forces of this city, carrying federation candidates to victory.

Mayor Daniel W. Hoan, Dist. Atty. Herbert J. Steffes and J. F. Friedrich, county chairman of the federation and general organizer of the Federated Trades Council, alike called upon every Federationist and sympathizer to "build *The Milwaukee Leader*".

Each of the thousands of Federationists in Milwaukee county was urged to become a personal booster for the *The Leader*, so that the message of liberalism and of the federation might be carried to every corner of the county.

Mayor Hoan sounded the keynote of the mass meeting in these challenging words:

"We need a powerful press. We need 15,000 to 20,000 more readers of *The Milwaukee Leader*. There are more liberal people in Milwaukee than there are conservatives. Let us get all of them to subscribe to *The Leader* and you'll have a paper you'll be proud of.

"*The Leader* was built upon the interests of the working class. We must go to work and increase its circulation. That's our job!

"It is our job to put our shoulders behind this election campaign and, even more important to build the medium of information that will go to our members and to workers generally."

* * *

Under a plan announced at the meeting, every member of the federation is to be mobilized to expand the circulation of *The Leader* and every federation unit reaching a scheduled quota will receive a bonus of \$50 in cash for use in the current campaign. All who attended received subscription blanks for an immediate start of the drive.

In that fall's election, Progressive Governor La Follette was swept out of office.

The final ploy by Holmes and his associates was attempted when the Hearst afternoon paper was suspended. This was again to change the name of their

paper, this time to *Milwaukee Evening Post*. The change was calculated to take maximum advantage of a new situation in which it seemed a minimum expectation that many former *News* readers would subscribe to the new *Post* for the sole reason that they did not like *The Journal*. With the new name went a new count: Vol. I No. 1, and this announcement, on January 16, 1939:

The Milwaukee Evening Post makes its bow with this issue to the people of Milwaukee and Wisconsin.

It is a new newspaper, but it is also an old newspaper--as old as its predecessor, *The Milwaukee Leader*; as old as the traditions of *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, where most of its executives got their newspaper training and experience; as old as the ideals of liberal journalism to which it is forever dedicated.

...although we have decided upon a change of name, WE CONTEMPLATE NO CHANGE WHATSOEVER FROM THE POLICIES TO WHICH WE ADHERED SINCE WE ASSUMED CONTROL OF THIS NEWSPAPER, April 20, 1938.

The Milwaukee Evening Post will be a newspaper edited and conducted by Milwaukeeans for Milwaukee.

It will aggressively support the liberal movement BUT IT WILL NOT BE A PARTY ORGAN.

It will zealously support the cause of labor BUT IT WILL NOT BE A LABOR ORGAN in the sense of owing allegiance to any one organization or group of organizations....

But we solemnly pledge that there will be no deviation from our steadfast support of liberal principles.

The circulation went up a little. But three months later the Holmes ownership was forced to step out, and the Trades Council took over the management and existing debt--and kept the paper going for one more year.

Perhaps the most extraordinary thing about the Holmes regime was that it managed to survive a year. For example, its obligations for print paper were constant and so large that the publishers could get no credit for it and could get newsprint only for cash on delivery. It happened frequently that the publishers were out of paper and without cash to pick up a C.O.D. carload that was piling up demurrage in a freight yard. Each time a short term loan was somehow managed--which also sank them deeper in debt.

Five weeks after assumption of control by the Holmes group, a dozen employees who were hired to "improve the paper" were laid off. This writer was one of them. During the summer all the editorial department employees were given one month of vacation--two weeks with pay, two without. Two more re-trenchments were made in the fall: one, another vacation without pay for all editorial department employees; the other, layoffs in all departments.

John Work recalled, "In the fall of 1938, Paul Holmes asked me to take a month's layoff, and I started to do so. Newspaper Writers Union No. 9, among

other things, insisted that I go right back to work which I did... also that I have the five-day week which all the others had had for several years, although I edited my page the full six days as usual.... In any event, I felt that I owed the continuance of my job to the union."

THE UNION OWNERSHIP

Leaders of the Federated Trades Council took over *The Evening Post* on March 27, 1939. The decision of the council to buy the paper was by unanimous vote. A campaign was started at once to raise \$125,000 by the end of the year "to put the paper on a sound financial basis and to get about 40,000 more subscribers".

On April 29, 1939 the numbering of the paper reverted to the original *Leader* chronology. The issue that day was Vol. 28 No. 122. On the front page under the headline "A Liberal Press for Milwaukee (An Editorial)" appeared in two column measure the following, in part:

The Milwaukee Evening Post has been, is and will continue to be an independent and a liberal newspaper.

Announcement was made in this newspaper yesterday that the local unions of Milwaukee affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, acting through the Federated Trades Council, have acquired the ownership and active control of the company publishing the newspaper.

This step was taken by the local unions in order to insure the continued publication of *The Evening Post*

Organized labor in Milwaukee has no interest in publishing a newspaper simply for the sake of publishing a newspaper.

But organized labor has an intense and vital interest in the existence of an aggressive, liberal press in Milwaukee.

Organized labor neither needs nor wants a private journalistic forum, but it is deeply concerned with the maintenance of a free and uncontrolled medium for the unbiased dissemination of news....

The Milwaukee Leader struggled valiantly to represent and portray the liberal view. Under-financed and handicapped by partisan control this newspaper fought a gallant but losing fight. A year ago it was sold to an independent group, and the name was changed to *The Milwaukee Evening Post*.... The paper made impressive progress in winning new friends and new readers.

If the new owners could have secured adequate capital to carry on with their project until the paper reached a sound and self-supporting basis, organized labor would never have considered entering the daily publishing field.

But a situation arose under which except for the financial help of the local unions, the newspaper would have been forced to suspend

publication or would have passed into hands unfriendly to the principles to which it was dedicated.

The directing heads of the local unions felt that if *The Post* should die, the last remaining daily news medium in Milwaukee upon which the workers and liberally minded citizenry could rely would be silenced. Entrenched monopoly would have a monopoly on the presentation and interpretation of news matter.

Rather than let this happen, it was felt that organized labor should accept the challenge to carry on the fight in behalf of free journalism. In so doing, it is assuming a community responsibility rather than seeking to benefit itself.

It feels that Milwaukee needs and will support a liberal press. Growing public support will be answered by enlargements, improvements and expansions in the newspaper itself.

There is nowhere in the newspaper management or ownership any control or allegiance to any political party....

The Post will fight for the interests of labor when those interests are consistent with the best public interests, but it does not aim to be a labor organ; it does aim to be a PEOPLE'S NEWSPAPER in every sense of the word. But first of all, it intends to be simply a newspaper, with no axe to grind performing to the best of its ability the primary newspaper function of gathering the news thoroughly, presenting it honestly and interpreting it fairly.

But the Milwaukee labor daily's fortunes were not destined to improve.

In connection with the open union ownership of the paper, a report in *The Post* of June 1, 1939 is of interest. The headline was "State Approves Milwaukee *Post* Finance Plan" with the deck, "Permits Union Ownership and Provides New Cash". The report said:

An arrangement aimed to improve the financial condition of *The Milwaukee Evening Post*, formerly *The Leader*, by giving it \$34,000 in new cash, and which permits AFL unions to complete taking over ownership of the paper was approved today by the state public service commission.

The commission amended a Dec. 30, 1938 bond and stock registration order for *The Post*, issued by the state banking commission when the securities division was a part of that department.

Under the new arrangement, \$80,000 in preferred stock in Wisconsin Guardian Publishing Co., publisher of *The Post*, will be transferred to the AFL unions from Thomas M. Duncan, who holds it as agent for Publishers, Inc., and the Social Democratic Publishing Co., the old companies that published *The Post* when it was *The Milwaukee Leader*. The unions already own the Guardian Publishing Co., which owns and publishes *The Post*.

Duncan, acting as agent for the two old publishing companies had

been given the \$80,000 of preferred stock under a contract executed in May 1938 in order to pay about \$46,000 in old claims against the two old companies. The remaining \$34,000 was to be a liquidating dividend to stockholders of the two old companies, but it will be waived in view of the payment of the old debts. The \$34,000 will thus be available as new cash for the company.

Since the unions have gained control of *The Post*, they wish to take over payment of the obligations of the old companies themselves, and are therefore proposing to take over the \$80,000 of preferred stock. Duncan, former executive secretary of Gov. La Follette, will not profit financially from the transaction....

Under terms of the amended registration, the unions will pay the old claims directly, and make about \$34,000 in cash available from their treasuries for operation of *The Post*.

The commission required that the \$80,000 preferred stock be sold to the unions only as organizations, and not to individual members, under a long-standing commission rule on securities which forbids a corporation which has not shown earnings to sell securities to the general public.

The Dec. 30, 1938 orders of registration by the banking commission registered \$125,000 of first mortgage 5 per cent bonds of the Wisconsin Guardian Publishing Co., secured by personal property, \$80,000 of 3 per cent noncumulative preferred stock with a par value of \$100 a share, and 3,000 shares of no-par value common stock.

The Trades Council's *Record of Proceedings* for the months of efforts to sustain *The Post* is full of reports of progress made, schemes for selling subscriptions, and the like. But four months after the drive for capital started only \$37,000 had been raised and "that being from about 37 unions".

One of the brave men fighting for *The Post* at the time was August L. Guis of the Typographical Local 23, delegate to the Trades Council and president of the paper under labor's ownership. On the day that labor took possession of the paper, Elmer Krahn, publisher,--who stuck with *The Leader* through thick and thin from 1915 to its end as *The Post* in 1942--"stated that he must have a carload of paper today or the paper would not be published". Guis paid for the carload of paper. He had been authorized to use \$2,000 of union funds to assist in keeping the plant running. But Guis' feeling was, according to the article in *Business Week*, that "*The Post* has been a poor paper. He knows it must be transformed into a paper that readers will want, that this will take time and money."

Sour notes began to be heard from a few delegates at the Trades Council meetings. For instance, at a meeting in July, "a member of the executive board of Brewery Workers Local 9 pointed out that the Brewery Workers had already invested \$5,000 and recommended that the entire membership be assessed \$1 which would raise sufficient funds to put the paper over the top." To this, "Sister Beatrice Weiland of Smith Steel Auxiliary 19806 stated that she believed that the paper should be built into a better newspaper and the paper should be sold

on its merits instead of asking for donations." General Secretary Herman Seide took exception to "the crack about donations". He said that while some money did come in as donations "the sums of \$300 to \$5,000 and over were investments ...the unions contributing those sums would be given stocks and bonds for their investments". And, he added that *The Evening Post* "could be put on a paying basis". Seide also informed the delegates at the same meeting that the employees of *The Post* had worked for five weeks without pay.

At the council's meeting on December 6, 1939, it was reported that only \$47,000 had been subscribed to shares in the labor publishing company, about half of which came from six unions, and approximately 75 per cent of the 200-odd unions affiliated with the Trades Council had made no contribution at all.

Seven months later, after the council turned over control of the paper to an organization of the paper's employees, J. F. Friedrich, general organizer of the council, reported that the final figure reached in the drive to raise \$125,000 in capital was \$70,000--after which "the contributions stopped".

When the unions began running the paper, they set out to continue the "aggressive--liberal--independent" policies of the previous owners. Guis and fellow directors of the paper, who were officers of the council and five affiliated unions, announced in advance they intended to publish "neither an A.F.L. paper nor a trade union paper but one of liberal outlook, political independence, general reader interest for Milwaukee's traditionally liberal population" and would "give everybody a fair deal, including the Congress of Industrial Organizations". Leaders of the CIO scoffed. Criticism of the paper increased in the spring and summer of 1940. Building Service Employees Local 17 suggested that the council publish a weekly newspaper. Delegate Ben Rubin of Local 17 told a council meeting "*The Milwaukee Evening Post* does not answer the purpose" and what his union wanted was "a strictly union paper" mailed to the homes of union members, not a newspaper "sold to the general public".

The issue of a weekly was debated during labor's ownership of the daily and through the succeeding ownership by an employees' group, which was officially supported by the council. The printed "Record of Proceedings" of the council for July 17, 1940 contains 26 inches of type on a report and discussion of a proposed weekly labor paper. The board's recommendation that "no further action be taken on the matter at this time" was adopted. The establishment of a weekly would wait two years, after the daily's death throes ended.

During labor's direct ownership of it, the paper was discussed at every Trades Council meeting. It was the subject of pep talks by official and unofficial boosters of the paper at meetings of all the AFL local unions and doubtless some of the CIO unions--not to mention meetings of branches of the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation and the Socialist Party and union ladies auxiliaries. During this period, between the spring 1939 and the summer of 1940, the cause of the labor paper must have been preached to hundreds, more likely, thousands, of occasions. The burden of the pleas was: This is labor's paper--we need it--it's up to labor to support its own--labor is not doing enough to save the paper--if the paper goes under, it will be labor's loss and labor's fault.

Still, when labor gave up the effort to publish the paper because of lack

CHAPTER XI

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

THE COMING OF THE WAR IN MILWAUKEE

The Labor Day edition of *The Social-Democratic Herald* in Milwaukee in 1911 carried on pages one and two a 1,500-word message signed by Victor L. Berger which began:

For many years the ruling classes of Europe taught their dependents, the working people, that the noblest human sentiment was "patriotism," that is the "love of their native country."

By this the rulers meant the love of institutions which preserved THEIR POWER over the working class, and defended them against encroachments from the governments of other lands.

This FETICH worked well for a long time. It was deeply seated in the minds and hearts of the common people. The peasants in the country, and the workers in the towns, were always ready to take up arms against those who were born on the other side of some arbitrary geographical line.

They were always willing to rush to glory and the grave in defense of institutions in which they could have no possible interest except to OVERTHROW and destroy them.

The poor clods who thus, from servile deference to their masters, the possessing classes, exposed themselves to suffering and death, never for a moment stopped to ask themselves the question: Of what concern are all these matters to us?

Why should we French or English or German commoners fight among ourselves, and kill each other about the claims of Stuart or of the Orange; of Bourbon or Bonaparte; of the Roman pope or the Lutheran King?

Or, why should we, the common people, fight and bleed and die for the purpose of acquiring markets for the millionaire manufacturers, while we could use these products to much better advantage for ourselves, and for our wives and children?

But in 1911, Berger wrote, the thoughts of the working people had changed. They had learned

that the interests of all working classes, French, German, English, American, were one and the same... the working people of all nations no longer (to) let themselves be divided by arbitrary geographical lines, by rivers or mountains and by the conflicting interests of their masters, but to regard themselves as of ONE CLASS, ONE BROTHERHOOD.

The red-ink headline for the editorial was "Milwaukee Workingmen Cannot Be Fooled--Victor L. Berger". A new day had dawned for Milwaukee "and it is soon coming for all other cities". So wrote the first Socialist to enter congress. He concluded, "All hail! You workingmen and working women of Milwaukee--you form the vanguard of the greatest and most beneficial revolution this world has ever seen."

There was peace on earth when Berger wrote and had been during the existence of the Social-Democratic Party of America--except for the almost paranthetic coincidence that the party had been born in the midst of war. That was the Spanish-American War which broke out in April 1898, two months before the party's founding convention, and was finished a couple of months later. The war "to free Cuba", emotionally and politically backed by the American people, did not particularly worry the Socialists. They did not seem to notice it. The only mention of war in their first national platform was this, the last of 12 demands: "Abolition of war, as far as the United States are concerned, and the introduction of international arbitration instead."

When Berger had published his editorial, there had been peace for the long period after Germany had defeated France in 1871, and there still would be for three years more before the outbreak of the First World War.

The belief was widespread that the long-term peace among the nations had been effected by Socialism, the international movement that considered the cause of workers in different countries as a common cause against a common oppressor--capitalism.

Berger cited the "tremendous headway" toward establishing a new world order made by "progressive workingmen" of "the enlightened countries of Europe"--France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Austria, England, and the Scandinavian countries--where "they formed great political parties--Social-Democratic parties". So successful had the parties become that "the great Social-Democracy has polled by far the largest vote of any party in Germany".

And Germany leads in trade unionism, he added.

One exception during that period of peace was the conflict in 1904-1905 between Russia and Japan, countries which were not "enlightened", according to the prevailing opinion in Western Europe.

Interaction was a characteristic of the international force of Socialism. The growth of enlightened social reforms in one country accelerated a like growth in others, and the crescendo years of socialism in America, in Wisconsin, and in Milwaukee were likewise influenced by the developments in Europe, particularly in Germany which the American socialists regarded as the exemplar of progress and culture. But, of course, the growth of the socially aware political parties and the unions arose from more assorted causes than simply from a unifying spirit of brotherhood; there were also such causal factors as improvements in living standards, literacy, and the modes of production.

While there was no war in Europe during this so-called period of peace, all the European powers were getting ready for war and had been getting ready ever since the Franco-German War. They had been spending enormous sums every year for building up their armies and armaments. All able-bodied men, except in England, were compelled to serve in the army for two or three years after which they had to stay in the reserves. When the war of 1914 broke out, Germany and France had each over four million men in their armies, Russia six or seven million, and Austria-Hungary one and one-half million.

England relied upon her navy which she had maintained at a strength equal to that of any two other powers. But in 1897 Germany began building a navy so fast that the other nations joined this phase of the armaments race, adding still more to the costs of "preparedness".

An irony of retrospect is that it was when the European arms race was accelerating that the Socialists of the United States organized their political party and declared in their first platform: "The solidarity of labor connecting us with millions of class-conscious fellow workers will lead to international Socialism, the brotherhood of man." The formula of faith in international socialism was adhered to by all the comrades in all the industrialized countries during the years of non-war.

THE BREECH AMONG THE SOCIALISTS

As events occurred, as steam comes from water boiled over a fire, as the nations heated up to war, the Socialists began to split--they split in the world, in the separate countries, in the United States, in Wisconsin, in Milwaukee. Some held fast to the common cause of workers in all countries. Others adapted to different priorities in the complex of developments.

The future from the viewing point of Labor Day in 1911 was a bright sun rising on the horizon with the sure promise of a beautiful day. Tomorrow and the day after and the days to follow would be the same and better as all the days of the preceding ten years had been getting progressively better. But clouds began to appear in the East, the geographic as well as the metaphoric.

There was in those days a chronic "Eastern Question", which was really a complex of issues about the Squeezing of the Turks out of Europe and whether Austria-Hungary or Russia would profit most from the expulsion and involving the animosities between the Balkan states--which persist even unto this day. The first Balkan War erupted in October 1912 when Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and

Montenegro combined against Turkey and won. Then the victors, jealous over the booty, started the second Balkan war in the summer of 1913, with Bulgaria fighting Greece and Serbia. This time the Bulgars were licked. These were the tempests conjoined with imperialism which precipitated the war in 1914 that would be the most terrible in the history of the world until then.

In the highlight of the chiaroscuro of 1912 was the election in Germany when the Socialists polled 4,250,000 votes, electing 110 deputies in the Reichstag, thus becoming the strongest party in Germany. Led by Eduard Bernstein, the party was committed to a course of parliamentary reform toward a new social world. In the dark part of the picture the Socialists in the Reichstag in 1914 voted for appropriations for the war in acquiescence that they were necessary for the defense of the Fatherland against autocratic Russia.

The German Socialist Party split in the middle of the war, in March 1916. Bernstein joined the pacifist Independent wing.

Conciliatory ingredients were mixed with the imperialistic in the stew of international relations that simmered for decades before the explosion of the War of 1914. Typical of this were two agreements centered on the Bagdad Railway, a cherished plan of Germany for a railroad from Berlin to Bagdad and the Persian Gulf. In 1910 the Russians promised no longer to oppose the railway while the Germans gave the Russians a free hand in northern Persia. This was the Potsdam Agreement. On June 15, 1914 an Anglo-German Agreement was reached that confirmed the plan for the Bagdad Railway, with the Germans recognizing England's preponderant interests in the shipping on the Euphrates. Thirteen days after this agreement was initialed the fuse of the war was ignited by the assassination of the Archduke of Austria-Hungary, the heir to the throne, on a visit in Serbia.

On July 28, Austria declared war on Serbia which set off an instant volley of violence with firings in this order: July 29, Russia began to mobilize; July 31, Germany sent a 12-hour ultimatum to Russia to quit; August 1, Germany declared war on Russia; August 2, German troops occupied Luxemburg and began marching on France; August 3, Germany declared war on France and invaded Belgium; August 4, Germany declared war on Belgium and England declared war on Germany. Then day after day declarations of war followed, and within three months after the first by Austria, the central powers--Germany, Austria, and Turkey--were pitted against the allies--Serbia, Russia, France, Belgium, England, Montenegro, and Japan. More than 50 declarations of war ensued in the months and years, by nations in North and South America and Asia in addition to Europe. The last was on July 19, 1918 by Honduras on Germany.

On August 4, the day after Germany invaded Belgium, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed in a message to the senate, "The United States must be neutral in fact as well as in name." While the European nations had been armed to the teeth, at the time the United States entered the war in April 1917 its regular army numbered only 133,000 supplemented by 67,000 in the national guard, and the navy owned only three transports.

The people in each of the old countries were united in their attitudes concerning their respective best national interests and who their natural enemies were. The people in the new land were immigrants and descendants of immigrants from the European countries. In varying degrees they retained loyalties to their origins mixed with allegiance to America. And in these varying degrees they were all "hyphenated" Americans.

The neutrality of the American government would be maintained for two and a half years, then, buffeted by events, it would shatter. But the sentiments of the American people during this time would be divided into pro-Ally, pro-German, and pro-neutral. The latter category included intrinsic neutralists, pure pacifists, and opponents of imperialism, with all divisions made up of non-Socialists and Socialists.

"Working people in general were both neutral and pacifist," the historian Morison has written. He said that the war in Europe represented what the immigrants had come to America to escape. "The Mid-Westerner could think no ill of Germans because so many of them were his good neighbors."¹

I, the writer, remember a conversation in August 1914 at our home in Milwaukee between two Swedish-Americans, my father and a friend, about the invasion of Belgium. They agreed that if the Germans had not committed the misdeed the French would have done it--the Germans just got there first by jumping the gun.

It is opportune here to explicate the purpose of the present recounting of the causes and currents of the First World War. In the life of Socialism, the war was the fate that ended the international movement, that destroyed the certainty that the workers of the world would unite, that split the Socialist Party of America beyond possibility of its regaining the strength and momentum it had before the war. And the cumulative effects of the irrationality of events knocked the Socialist Party of Wisconsin into a lingering decline.

The coincidental purposes of this chapter are, first, to set forth the Socialist stand on the war, to record that it was in accord with an established principled judgment of war, and then to note the conflicting reactions which events evoked in the comrades.

The Socialists in America were at one with the government from the beginning of the war in Europe through the years 1915 and 1916. Both the Socialist Party and President Woodrow Wilson's administration adhered to neutrality during this time although for different reasons. The Socialists were just against war. Woodrow Wilson had a dream of using his presidency as a power base for peace. The United States would maintain its rights as a neutral nation against both the British blockade of Germany and the German U-boat retaliations, and would keep out of the carnage and thus uninvolved would be able to mediate a settlement and show the way to lasting and universal peace in the world. Wilson's later advocacy of the League of Nations was something of an anticlimax to his dream. The Socialists' neutrality was genuine. It was so in Milwaukee.

On May 1, 1915 a German submarine torpedoed and sank the American tanker *Gulfflight* without warning. The incident evoked a Socialist comment on the conditions of neutrality in a *Milwaukee Leader* editorial:

The United States has been doing a great deal of "bluffing" in its role of a world power. The conclusion has become fixed in the foreign offices of Europe and Asia that the last thing the United States will do is fight.

It was only a few weeks ago that Mr. Wilson was talking turkey to the kaiser. "If one of your submarines shall sink one of our ships I'll hold you to a strict accountability," Mr. Wilson said in giving him fair warning of the dread consequences.

"Pooh, pooh," the kaiser says, and turns about and sinks the first ship that comes his way.

The news is received calmly at Washington. The president and the secretary of state cut out the word German from the American Consul's dispatch that the ship was sunk by a German submarine. They want to believe that it was a floating mine or some other unidentified explosive that caused the accident.

There is more money in selling supplies to the belligerents than in equipping an army to keep the door open in China or to avenge the sinking of a tank steamer in the North Sea.

Neutrality demands that the allies shall pay for their ammunition and Germany for what it can get.

"War is Poor Business" was the headline of the editorial which by ironic coincidence appeared on May 7, the day that the *Lusitania* was sunk.

The Socialists in Milwaukee did not gain any popular support for their position during the neutrality period. Pro-German sentiment was the strongest in the city where more than half of the people had German names; where there was an influential German press, German schools, German societies and clubs; and a prevalent German culture. Still, the historian, records that the daily *Germania Herald* had a circulation of 24,000 in 1914 and the weekly *Germania*, 100,000. Still says:

The focus of the prevailing pro-German sentiment was the National German-American Alliance, an organization of American origin, which had been founded in Pennsylvania in 1901 to promote the interests of the German element in this country, and which claimed 37,000 Wisconsinites among its some 2,000,000 members in 1914. With the outbreak of the war, the Alliance made no secret of its sympathy for the Central Powers.

Dr. Leo Stern, one of the assistant superintendents of the Milwaukee public schools and president of the Wisconsin Alliance, organized an impressive demonstration at which

resolutions were passed appealing to the American press to "throw off the yoke which the English-monopolized news service has placed upon it." Dr. Bernhard Dernburg defended Germany's invasion of Belgium before a large gathering in Milwaukee on December 11, 1914. The Wisconsin Alliance raised money by selling pictures of Wilhelm II and Franz Josef, and nearly 175,000 Milwaukeeans attended a bazaar held for seven days during the first week of March 1916, at which a fund of about \$150,000 was raised for the German, Austrian and Hungarian war sufferers of Europe.²

The pro-Germans included some Socialists. Walter Wyrick, who at the time was a Socialist and on the staff of *The Milwaukee Leader*, reflects their attitudes on the war. He quit the Party and the *Leader* in the throes of the war and joined *The Milwaukee Journal*. In 1940 in a full-page *Journal* story on the Milwaukee Socialists, Wyrick recalled:

In the opening days of the war, Berger wrote an editorial which expressed the traditional anti-war principles of his party and assailed war makers of all nations. The article outraged many Germans of Socialist leanings. Copies of the paper were torn to bits and trampled under foot.

The war division had some curious results. The Socialists had been strong in Polish working class sections of the south side. Poland's cause was that of the Allies to many Milwaukee Poles. America's entry into the war hastened the decline of Socialist strength in that section.³

So from national origins cropped out cracks in the Socialist structure in Milwaukee as everywhere else, even before America became implicated in the war.

In the congressional election in November 1914, Victor Berger got the least number of votes and the smallest percentage he was to receive in ten congressional elections from 1910 through 1928. His Republican opponent, William H. Stafford, appealed to the pro-Germans and was backed by the German-American Alliance. He received 15,620 votes. Berger's total was 11,674, down from 13,497 in 1910 and 14,025 in 1912 when Stafford defeated him for re-election.⁴

On May 7, 1915 a German submarine torpedoed without warning and sank the liner *Lusitania* off the coast of Ireland with the loss of lives of 1,100 civilian passengers, including 128 Americans.⁵

Three days later, President Wilson said, "There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight." Three days after that, he dispatched a note to the German government demanding disavowal of the incident, reparation, and a pledge to "prevent the recurrence of anything so obviously subversive of the principles of warfare". He sent two more warning notes to Germany. And neutrality remained in force.

In Milwaukee the reactions to the torpedoing of the *Lusitania* were told by *The Milwaukee Leader* in several ways: by big headlines over the reports, large amount of space, and follow stories for successive days; by opinions expressed by representative community leaders about the sinking; and the Socialist reactions in the text of an official statement on May 15 and in an editorial on May 18.

An "extra" edition of *The Leader* on May 7 broke the news under a banner headline, "LUSITANIA IS SUNK: ALL ARE SAVED". The dateline was London.⁶ The next day the banner was "1,346 DROWN ON LUSITANIA", with a three-column subhead, "More than 100 of Victims Yankees; No Warning Given". The front page was practically filled with stories about the *Lusitania*.

The second page carried across its top the headline "Milwaukeeans Uphold Ship's Sinking". But the story, which was a poll of opinions, did not exactly bear out the heading. Opinions that did were stated by Theodore Kronshage, Jr.--"The *Lusitania* carried munitions of war for the use of the allies as part of her cargo. The German government was justified in sinking her." That, said Otto P. Seifriz, "shows the daring and efficiency of the German navy".

Emil von Schleinitz, editor of *The Germania* said, "Excuse me, I do not care to express an opinion at this time." Harry Plumb, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, said, "No public comment." Two others who refused to make statements were Gustav A. J. Trostel of Trostel & Sons Leather Company and Charles Manegold, Jr., of Waukesha Brewing Company. Dr. Charles H. Beale, pastor of the Grand Avenue Congregational Church, said, "From every point of view, the sinking of the *Lusitania* was deplorable." Oscar Ameringer, county organizer of the Social-Democratic Party, said, "The ship carried enough ammunition to kill regiments of Germans...why become excited over a small matter like the sinking of the *Lusitania*?"

On May 14 President Wilson's first note to Germany was reported under the front-page banner "Issue Squarely Before Germany", with the subhead "Kaiser is Told/Subsea War on/ U.S. Must Stop". The whole text of Wilson's note was printed in big body type. The first column on page one was headlined "Naturalized/Germans To/Uphold U.S./ In Trouble". The deck was "Editor of Germania-Herold/Declares Time Has Come for/All to Stand by Wilson/Others Agree".

On May 15 *The Leader* published under the headline, "National Socialist Committee Takes Firm Position Against Militarism; Urges Labor to Act", a resolution adopted by the committee and addressed to the people of the United States. The dateline was Chicago; no names of committee members were mentioned.

The Leader's definitive editorial on the sinking of the *Lusitania* appeared on May 18. In the detailed wrap-up of what had happened and why, the editorial observed:

The sinking of the *Lusitania* and the loss of 115 American lives undoubtedly was a horrible and murderous piece of work. However, all war is a horrible and murderous piece of work....

This paper could never be accused of leaning too much to the German side. In fact, Mr. Berger was beaten as a candidate for congress last fall because *The Leader* was said to be "anti-German." In reality *The Leader* is a Socialist and American and neutral newspaper. And because we stand for real neutrality--not pro-British neutrality--we refuse to become hysterical about the *Lusitania* incident.

The gist of the editorial was stated in the unusual boxed title, "There Must Be No War With Germany".

As the war in Europe raged on land and sea, a conflict of emotions also raged all over America. Theodore Roosevelt and General Leonard Wood led an anti-German military preparedness movement, fanned by the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Countering this was an anti-British movement that had more vigorous non-Teutonic elements in it than German. These included William Randolph Hearst with his chain of big-city newspapers who was not to be turned away from his own fostered "Yellow Peril", Japan; and *The Chicago Tribune* which ran articles exposing British propaganda about German "atrocities--lies planted by perfidious Albion"; and Irish-Americans, politically powerful and numerous in many cities, who were innately opposed to the English.

Strong and vocal in their feelings, too, were many non-Socialists who were opposed to any involvement in the war. These isolationists included Wisconsin's Senator La Follette; Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan; Missouri Senator William J. Stone, chairman of the senate foreign relations committee; Minnesota Congressman Charles A. Lindbergh, father of a son who would be famed as an aviator and an isolationist, too; and many others of prominence.

Nonetheless, America was involved--involved in an interactional momentum of emotions and events--events that kept on happening even while the government remained neutral.

In June 1915 Secretary of State William J. Bryan refused to sign President Wilson's second note to Germany on the *Lusitania* because he considered it too tough, so he resigned. In the fall President Wilson began publicly to advocate military preparedness. In January 1916 he toured the country to promote the idea that the only way to "keep out of the war" was to become so strong that no nation would dare attack us.

In Milwaukee on June 15, 1916 a preparedness parade marched down Grand Avenue under the auspices of *The Milwaukee Journal* in which more than 28,250 persons participated.⁷

On the day of the presidential election in November 1916, Bessie Comstock, a teacher in the 27th Avenue School⁸ in Milwaukee, conducted a secret straw vote of her fifth-grade pupils. She told the results in totals by rows of seats. The writer was the only kid in his row who voted for Wilson; all the others were for the Republican candidate Charles Evans Hughes. But Wilson carried the class by a close margin. Only one vote was cast for Allan Louis Benson, the Socialist candidate; all the kids knew who did it, a boy who always acted different.

When I reported at home, I told my pa that I voted for Wilson because he kept us out of the war. My father, a charter subscriber of *The Milwaukee Leader*, smiled and said I had voted right.

Our fifth-grade elections was a micro-picture of the national results. Wilson ran well ahead of Hughes in Milwaukee County, 34,812 to 27,831. Benson got 16,943, down from Debs' 19,243 in 1912. But Hughes won in Wisconsin.

"He kept us out of war!" became the campaign slogan that won the election for Wilson. About half of the Socialists in the country voted for him instead of their own Party candidate. Wilson received 49.3 percent of the popular vote compared to 46 percent for Hughes, and he won in the electoral college vote 277 to 254.

Allan L. Benson, the Socialist candidate, received 585,113 votes, three per cent of the total vote cast, compared to 901,873 for Debs, and six per cent of the total in 1912.

Even as Wilson was being inaugurated on March 4, 1917, the country was hurtling into the war and was officially at war on April 6. A series of explosive events seem to have predestined America's entry into the war! On January 31, 1917 Germany announced that unrestricted submarine warfare would start the next day and that any American or other neutral ship in the German-declared war zone around the British Isles or the Mediterranean would be sunk on sight. On February 3 Wilson severed diplomatic relations with Germany. On March 18 three unarmed American ships were sunk with many lives lost. On April 4 the senate passed a declaration of war on Germany by a vote of 86 to six. On April 4 the house concurred, 373 to 50, and the president signed the declaration.

Leaders of the Socialist Party of America assembled in emergency convention in St. Louis on April 7 to consider a stand on the war that congress had just declared.

There were accredited delegates from 44 states. The states not represented were Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The foreign-speaking federations of the Party were represented by fraternal delegates; these were Bohemian, Finnish, German, Italian, Lettish, Polish, Scandinavian, and South Slavic.

Wisconsin delegates to the St. Louis convention, chosen by the state executive committee, were Victor Berger, Emil Seidel, Winfield R. Gaylord,

Leo Krzycki, and John Doerfler, Jr., of Milwaukee; Nels P. Nielsen of Racine; and Gerrit T. Thorn of Oshkosh. (Thorn had been the Socialist candidate for attorney-general in the state election in November, 1916.) Three alternate delegates also named were Oscar Ameringer, Robert Buech, and Edmund T. Melms.

The convention was called to order by the national executive secretary, Adolph Germer. Morris Hillquit was elected chairman of the convention.

A half-dozen committees were elected of which the 15-member "Committee on War and Militarism" was the purposive one. Kate Richards O'Hare of Missouri received the most votes, 129, and chaired the committee. Hillquit ran second with 114. Berger and Gaylord were among the nominees; Berger with 66 votes was elected.

"It was a tense and nervous gathering of about two hundred delegates from all parts of the country," Hillquit wrote. He continued:

Algernon Lee of New York, Charles E. Ruthenberg of Cleveland, and I were elected a subcommittee to prepare a proclamation and war program. Secluded in a small hotel room, we worked on the draft for many hours...carefully weighing every phrase and every word, but determined to state our position without circumlocution or equivocation, to leave nothing unsaid.⁹

The subcommittee's draft was submitted as the majority report of the war and militarism committee to the convention. The preamble declared:

We brand the declaration of war by our government as a crime of our capitalist class against the people of the United States and against the nations of the world.

In all modern history there has been no war more unjustifiable than the war in which we are about to engage.

Among specific actions that Socialists were called upon to pursue were:

1. Continuous, active and public opposition to all capitalistic wars, through demonstrations, mass petitions and all other honorable effective means within our power.

2. Unyielding opposition to all proposed legislation for military or industrial conscription.

- e. Vigorous resistance to all reactionary measures, such as censorship of the press and mails, restriction of the rights of free speech, assemblage and organization, or compulsory arbitration and limitation of the right to strike.

A dissenting report by John Spargo declared, "Now that war is an accomplished fact...we hold that it is our Socialist duty to make whatever sacrifices may be necessary to enable our nation and its allies to win the war as speedily as possible."

The majority report was adopted by a vote of 140 for, 36 against. With the majority were from Wisconsin Berger, Buech, Krzycki, Nielsen, and Seidel.

Gaylord and Thorn voted for the Spargo report which Gaylord helped write.

The two reports were later put to a referendum of the membership, and the antiwar proclamation carried by a three-to-one margin.

Spargo was a member of the national executive committee of the Party, as were Hillquit and Berger. The other members were Anna A. Maley of Minnesota and John M. Work, editorial writer for *The Milwaukee Leader*. Work was not a delegate to the convention, but he supported the antiwar position.

Emil Seidel recalled in his memoirs the long train ride back home from St. Louis during which the Wisconsin comrades who differed on the war issue did not speak to each other.¹⁰

The breach was a small but positive symptom of an effect of the war on the Socialists all over the country.

The St. Louis proclamation was the final cause for the exodus of practically the entire echelon of intellectuals from the Party, and trade unionists, too. The result, which had been foreshadowed in 1916, was that "except for Hillquit, Berger, and Debs, not one major 'name' remained in the ranks of American Socialism after the war."¹¹

The drift was signaled in March 1916 when Jack London resigned formally from the Party in a letter with the salutation, "Dear Comrades", and the complimentary closing, "Yours for the Revolution". An activist in the Socialist Party since 1900 and the Socialist Labor Party before that, London was one of the most popular writers in Europe and America during the crescendo years. He resigned, he said, because of the party's "loss of emphasis on the class struggle".

A number of leading Socialists announced their support for Wilson in the election. Look at their names and the names of those who quit the Party because of its opposition to America's entry into the war. The national antecedents indicated by the names coincided with the sides their bearers took on the war. They were not German names. Among the Socialists who formed the Woodrow Wilson Independent League were William English Walling; Max Eastman and John Reed of the chic radical *Masses* magazine; Mother Jones, legendary union organizer of coal miners; and Ernest Poole, whose popular radical novel, *The Harbor*, had been carried serially in *The Milwaukee Leader*.

Other prominent Socialists who later left the Party were John Spargo, editor of *The Comrade*, member of the national executive committee, and an English immigrant; Allan Benson, the Socialist candidate for president in 1916; George D. Herron; Robert Hunter; Charles Edward Russell; J. G. Phelps Stokes; and Upton Sinclair, whose novel, *The Jungle*, was the most widely read book in the literature of exposure during the crescendo years.

Also among those who bolted were Chester M. Wright, editor of *The New York Call* and former city editor of *The Milwaukee Leader*; and William James Ghent, who had been the first secretary and principal of the Rand School of Social Science and Victor Berger's congressional secretary.

And there was A.M. Simons, as he was publicly known, who did not exactly resign but was ousted from the Party.

The story of Algie Martin Simons is apposite here.

A. M. SIMONS

A Socialist editor and writer from the time the Socialist Party was organized, Algie Martin Simons came to Milwaukee in the summer of 1913 to join the staff of *The Milwaukee Leader*, to be editor of its national edition. His most recent position had been that of editor of *The Coming Nation*, a monthly published by J. A. Wayland in Girard, Kansas, as the literary supplement to *Appeal To Reason*, the weekly with the largest circulation of any Socialist publication in America--more than 500,000 at its peak. But the monthly magazine ceased publication in May 1913; Simons had been its editor since August 1910.

Algie Martin Simons was born, brought up, and educated in Wisconsin. A son of farm folks, his birthplace was North Freedom, Sauk County, the date, October 9, 1870. He attended country grade schools, Baraboo High School, and the University of Wisconsin where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and was graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1895. He studied economics and history, his special interests, under Professors Richard T. Ely, John R. Commons, and Frederick Jackson Turner.

After college he went to Chicago where he did social work. In 1898, a convinced Socialist, he became editor of *The Workers' Call*. Two years later Charles H. Kerr hired him as editor of the monthly *International Socialist Review*, a magazine intellectual and heavy with Socialist theory.

Simons authored the first published Socialist view of American history, *Class Struggles in America*, put out by Kerr as a pamphlet in 1903, then revised and enlarged in a booklet in 1906. The work was translated in some 20 languages. A sequential Simons' work, *Social Forces in American History*, was a 325-page book published by the Macmillan Company in 1911. This was the "Book of the Week" in the Friday Literary Review of *The Chicago Evening Post*, November 17, 1911. The book was discussed in reviews in magazines and newspapers in America and Europe and was quoted in an editorial in *The Chicago Tribune*.

A laudatory review in *The Milwaukee Leader*, with no by-line, on the editorial page, said Simons had "set forth the real economic and social forces which have made our country what it is today" and "The book can be obtained at the Brisbane Hall bookstore."

A review in the Socialist daily, *The New York Call*, by Joshua Wanhope, March 24, 1912, said:

We believe that Simons has placed at the disposal of his Comrades a work which it is no exaggeration to say is almost indispensable....
...the economic interpretation of history.... Socialist theories must have their basis in historical facts and these facts are both plentifully supplied and admirably presented in this compact and valuable work.

"When the Socialist movement began to make progress in the United States, it found itself badly handicapped by lack of appropriate literature," Hillquit wrote in his autobiography.¹² Hillquit's *History of Socialism in the United States* was first published in 1908, his first contribution to an "appropriate literature".

During the period when Simons was associated with Charles H. Kerr of *The International Socialist Review*, he was in the left wing of the Party. Along with Eugene Debs, William D. Haywood, and Ernest Untermann of that faction he was one of the founders of the Industrial Workers of the World in 1905. Simons did not attend, nor did Debs, the second convention of the IWW in 1906 when Daniel De Leon and the antipolitical syndicalists had taken control of the organization. Simons dropped out of it. Kerr, a persistent left-winger, fired him as editor of *The International Socialist Review*.

Simons was then elected editor of *The Chicago Daily Socialist*, the Socialists' first English language daily newspaper. The paper was started as a daily publication of *The Chicago Socialist* on a temporary basis two weeks before the elections in November 1906; the paper first had been *The Workers' Call*, edited by Simons. But the daily caught on and continued for more than six years.¹³ Simons stayed with it for four years until he became editor of *The Coming Nation* in 1910.

Simons' wife was his lifelong comrade and intellectual peer who was nee May Wood and who had been his classmate at Baraboo High School. They had married in June 1897 at Baraboo. They joined the Socialist Party together in Chicago in the beginning of their careers.

May Wood Simons was one of eight delegates elected in a national Party election in 1910 to the Socialist International Congress. Among the others elected were Victor Berger, who had received the most votes, Morris Hillquit and John Spargo. She was chairman of the national education committee of the Socialist Party. She was active in the Women's Trade Union League and a member of the Actors' International Union (American Federation of Labor). She was a high school teacher, a lecturer, a writer, and held the doctor of philosophy degree.

When they moved to Milwaukee, Algie and May Simons quickly became part of

the Socialists' social world. "They took no direct role in political activity, but they soon became good friends of Victor and Meta Berger, and together the two couples attended the theater, lectures, recitals, and the familiar round of Socialist rallies."¹⁴

Algie Simons' coming to Milwaukee following the discontinuance of *The Coming Nation* was a follow-up on an invitation from Berger who had once told him that if he ever needed a job there would be a place for him on *The Milwaukee Leader*. Simons took up the offer without enthusiasm but with the feeling that for the time being at least it was the best he could do. His work for *The Leader* included writing editorials, straight news and headlines, editing copy, and serving as managing editor.

"He did not anticipate the events that would completely alter his relations with Berger, the Milwaukee Socialists, and the Party as a whole."¹⁵

The events were those connected with the war.

Gradually, then increasingly, from the outbreak in Europe, Simons was irritated and dismayed by the pro-German sentiment in the city of so many Germans and so many Socialists. Concurrently, his own antimilitaristic ideas faded away, and his pro-Ally feelings grew stronger.

Simons had been a member of the national executive committee of the Socialist Party, had failed re-election in the election of 1910. In 1916 he campaigned once more for the council but failed again. This defeat probably contributed to his decision to quit *The Leader*, which he did in December 1916.

He exploded his reactions immediately concerning the Socialists in Milwaukee and in the nation in an article he wrote for *The New Republic*, December 2, 1916, entitled "The Future of the Socialist Party". He wrote, "our Party has ceased to be American.... Intellectually and politically, the mind of the Party is in Europe. The war has emphasized this. A careful scheme was set in motion to capture the machinery of the Party by those in sympathy with the ruling class in Germany."

As agitation mounted in Milwaukee and more and more people took sides on the war, mass meetings for opposing purposes filled the auditorium. When a Socialist rally declaring for peace was held on the night of February 25, 1917, the pro-Ally *Milwaukee Journal* called on Simons to write about it. He did. The meeting, he said, was one more instance of an effort to use the machinery of the Socialist Party in the interests of German imperialism and militarism.¹⁶

On March 15, 1917 a mass meeting attended by 7,000 people was called by a group of business and civic leaders "to voice the protest of loyal citizens against pro-German propaganda being conducted to prevent the entrance of the United States into the World War." This affair was followed up by the formation a week later of the Wisconsin Defense League whose patriotic purposes included helping in recruiting for the army, navy, and marines. It assisted in organizing county councils of defense in 64 of the 71 counties in the state and assisted in the organization of many forms of war activities. A.M. Simons was appointed to the salaried position of state organizer.

From the Defense League sprang the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, organized September 27, 1917 by citizens from every part of the state after the nation was in the war. Among the prominent persons leading the Legion was Chief Justice John B. Winslow; Secretary of State Merlin M. Hull, later a Progressive Party congressman; Walter S. Goodland, Racine publisher and editor, later governor; and Professor Richard T. Ely, president of the Madison Legion. Winfield R. Gaylord was one of the active leaders.

A. M. Simons was director of the Legion's Speakers' Bureau which furnished the Four Minute Men who delivered 5,000 speeches in the course of the war.

The Legion was pledged to uphold the draft, to seek out and punish traitors, to hold up slackers to public contempt, to aid in building up the nation's fighting strength, to teach and practice patriotism.

But before the formation of the Loyalty Legion and before America's entrance into the war, Simons had been patriotic in his way. He wrote for *The Milwaukee Journal*. About the Socialists' St. Louis proclamation, he wrote, "I would be a traitor if I were not to reveal this murderous treason... on the part of men whose only excuse must be their mad devotion to German autocracy." He wrote a letter to U.S. Senator Paul O. Husting listing Victor Berger's "treasonous" activities since 1914.

When this got out, the Milwaukee Socialists had had it. The county central committee on May 1, 1917 expelled Simons from the Party by a vote of 63 to three.

The first sentence in Simon's book, *Class Struggles in America*, published in 1903, is: "American history begins in Europe." Simons wrote in a personal letter in August 1927, "All my ancestors, on both sides, came from the British Isles, and all have been in this country for at least a century."

Patriotism, what it is and the power of it, was not something that had never been understood until its existence was disclosed by the First World War. The word itself had been in use in the English language for a couple hundred years. Samuel Johnson's familiar wisecrack, "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel", was made in 1775. It was formed on an adaptation of Greek words meaning "of one's fathers" and "fatherland". A Curious bit of history is that in the 1890's an eminent Marxist had discoursed on patriotism in lectures on Socialism. The lectures by Werner Sombart, German economist who later rejected Marxism, were translated and put together in a book, *Socialism and the Social Movement in the 19th Century, with a Chronicle of the Social Movement 1750-1896*, circulated in the United States. Sombart said:

Patriotism, the love of the Fatherland, is indeed a feeling that unconsciously and without effort is held fast in our hearts, and exists therein like love of home and family. It is an aggregation of impressions, of memories over which we have no control. It is that definable power exercised upon our souls by the sound of the mother tongue, by the harmony of the national song, by many peculiar customs and usages, by the whole history and poetry of the homeland.... It is a foolish idea that such a feeling may, or can, die out in the great masses of men so long as there are lands and peoples with their own languages and songs.¹⁷

THE WAR-TIME BOLTING OF WISCONSIN SOCIALISTS

The bolting of national celebrities from the Socialist Party who publicized their views was but one manifestation of patriotism stirred by the war. The immediate revelation to all the comrades (and the unenlightened, too) was that there were passions rooted in men that conflicted with the spirit of international brotherhood. The lasting effect was a loss to the movement of the intellectual powers, of minds and spirits and wills and enthusiasms, that would not be replaced. At the same time varied expressions of patriotic feelings rippled and counter-rippled wherever there were members and supporters of the Party; so, too, in Milwaukee and Wisconsin.

The neighborhood on old Thirtieth Avenue in Milwaukee where I lived was called "German-town". In the old houses on the other side of the street, Plattdeutsch families, all large, lived next door to each other for a couple of blocks. The parents had emigrated together from the Vaterland. Most of the husbands and grown sons worked in the Milwaukee Road railroad shops. Before America got into the war, I would hear the kids say it would be *Deutschland ueber alles*. Because, I was told, it said so in the Bible and that when it was all over the Kaiser would be riding on a big white horse in front of the *deutsch Soldaten*, and Germany would rule the world. That was in the Bible, my playmates said, but it was not in the Bible in our house.

About the same time, more and more of the Germans in the neighborhood started to take *The Milwaukee Leader*. The fact that the workers in the railroad shops were union men had something to do with that. I myself started to peddle *The Leader* to those families as soon as I was twelve in 1918. (I peddled all the other English newspapers, too).

There lived in those days on Lapham Street which crossed Thirtieth Avenue two families that were different from the rest of the neighborhood. They kept pretty much to themselves. They were English and said to be Socialists. They had been taking *The Milwaukee Leader* and then when other people started to subscribe, they stopped. And it was in ways like that that some people expressed their feelings about what was going on.

Among well-known Milwaukee Socialists who left the Party were J.E. Harris and Walter Wyrick of *The Milwaukee Leader* editorial staff, who, like Simons, also quit working for the paper; Civil Judge Joseph E. Cordes, who was of Polish descent; Albert J. Welch, who was one of the first Socialists elected to the common council in 1904 and later elected to the school board; Carl D. Thompson; and Winfield R. Gaylord.

Thompson and Gaylord were clergymen who went out from their pulpits into the secular world to preach Socialism and to work for it. Several hundred men of the cloth had the call to apply Christianity through Socialist endeavors in the movement's scresendo decade. Other prominent ministers in the Party were George D. Herron, Walter Thomas Mills, and George R. Lunn. The latter was elected mayor of Schenectady in 1911 on the Socialist ticket and carried with him the candidates of the principal city offices and a majority of the city council.¹⁸

Biographies of those who dissented from the Party line and departed from

the house of comrades were henceforth obscured. What they did after they left, nobody knew. No one talked about them, their names were not mentioned any more. They became nonpersons. And what they had done for the cause before they transgressed was forgotten. Likewise, latter-day historians in academe followed the Party line in their published writings and suppressed accounts of the good deeds of the one-time comrades before they sinned, and slurred their names.

In their immediate after-careers as Socialists, Thompson concentrated on the Public Ownership League, a national organization in which he had been occupied even before the war; and Gaylord became active in carrying out the Spargo resolution that he helped write at the St. Louis convention "to make whatever sacrifices may be necessary to enable our nation and its allies to win the war." He joined Simons in starting the Wisconsin Defense League, was one of the founders of the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion, was one of a number of pro-war Socialists associated with trade union leaders in establishing the American Alliance for Labor and Democracy of which Samuel Gompers was elected chairman. (A passing observation of numerology: the three Socialist leaders, so similar in many ways, were born in the same year, 1870, Thompson in March, Gaylord in June, Simons in October).

The careers of Thompson and Gaylord as Socialists were strikingly similar. Both came to Wisconsin from out of state to help build the Party in the beginning of its existence; both college educated, both Congregational ministers; each served as state organizer for the Party, each was elected on the Party ticket to the legislature; each was the Party candidate for governor, Gaylord in 1906, Thompson in 1912; each was a member of the national committee of the Party.

Carl D. Thompson had been a Wisconsin resident for three years before becoming involved in the Socialist movement in 1901. He had been pastor of the Congregational Church in the village of Sharon in Walworth County, adjoining the Illinois state line. He had served in the Congregational ministry for a total of ten years. He was graduated from the Chicago Theological Seminary in 1898, from Gates College, Nebraska, in 1895. He received the master's degree from the University of Chicago in 1900. He was born in the village of Berlin in Michigan.

As a Socialist, Thompson served as the state organizer and lecturer for the Party in Wisconsin from 1904 to 1907. He was elected in 1906 to the assembly in the 12th District representing the 19th and 22nd Wards of Milwaukee. In 1910 he was elected city clerk by the common council's Socialist majority. While in this office he helped compile information for the next election.¹⁹ A few years later he became director of the information department of the national Party.

WINFIELD R. GAYLORD

The Socialist Party of America at its convention in 1912 adopted an amendment to its constitution providing for the expulsion of any member "who opposes political action or advocates crime against the person or other methods of violence." The action was the Socialists' expression of opposition to the tactics of violence of the Industrial Workers of the World. The amendment was

proposed by Winfield Gaylord. In telling this in his history, Shannon identifies Gaylord as "an eccentric former Congregational minister who rode around Milwaukee in a motorcycle with his sons in the sidecar." If riding the motorcycle is supposed to be evidence of eccentricity, it is not very convincing. Nor is it clear what relevance Gaylord's motorcycle has to the amendment which he submitted to the convention which accepted it by a vote of 191 to 90. Nor is Shannon's identification correct of Gaylord later in his book as "a former Socialist state assemblyman". Explanation of Shannon's words about Gaylord before the war probably lies in Shannon's judgment that Gaylord was an "apostate" Socialist when the United States went to war.²⁰

Here is the story of Winfield R. Gaylord in the days of Socialism's great expectations. He joined the Party when he came to Milwaukee in 1902 at the age of 32 after having been a minister in Methodist and Congregational churches for thirteen years in Minnesota, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

After receiving common school education in Cleveland, Ohio, Gaylord studied at Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, Ohio; Hamlin University, St. Paul; Northwestern University, Evanston; and Chicago Theological Seminary where he completed his studies in 1908.

Gaylord was a public speaker of excellence. He began lecturing for the Socialist Party when he came to Milwaukee. In the years that followed he became a national lecturer for the Party, making appearances in forty states. Gaylord, as a spokesman for the Milwaukee Socialists as early as 1930, named big-name grafters at a mass meeting called by the Milwaukee *Turnverein*. The minutes of the Social-Democratic platform convention held at Ethical Hall in Milwaukee in March 1910 printed in *The Herald* recorded: "Comrade Berger then moved that Comrade Gaylord give a 'rousifying' Socialist speech. Carried."²¹

Gaylord complied and "related various legislative experiences" as the only Socialist state senator.

Gaylord was also a writer for the Socialist cause. Typical of the analytical articles of the times was one in *The Herald*, March 1910, under the by-line "Senator W.R. Gaylord", with the headline, "The Murderous Milwaukee Street Car System--An Appreciation". The article began by identifying the sucker-bearing arms of "the Wall street octopus", the North American company, that controlled the Milwaukee street cars and lighting system. "Nobody with sense and honesty denies that the street car company debauched Milwaukee politics before the advent of the Social-Democratic Party in this city as a political factor," Gaylord wrote.

The crux of the article was stated, "The operation of Milwaukee Street Cars is Murderous." They ran down people and killed them. Gaylord wrote, "The returns from the coroner's office show the following"

"1907 - Killed by the T.M.E.R. & L. Co.	39
"1908 - Killed by the T.M.E.R. & L. Co.	23
"1909 - Killed by the T.M.E.R. & L. Co.	22

"It is twenty times as dangerous to be on the streets of Milwaukee as on the streets of London." Berlin, Boston, New York were all much safer than Milwaukee in the years cited.

Gaylord listed as the reasons for the dangers in Milwaukee: the street cars had no power brakes, had no emergency tools, had inadequate fenders.

In 1907 and 1908 Gaylord was the state organizer of the Social Democratic Party of Wisconsin. In the winter of those years, he met Carl Sandburg in Chicago. The Sandburg biographer, relates that meeting, saying that both men liked the Socialist philosophy, and that Sandburg accepted an offer of employment by Gaylord as a paid organizer of the Party in Two Rivers and Manitowoc. It is interesting to note that Sandburg, known throughout the English-speaking world as the poet of the American midwest, continued as a Socialist activist until he joined the staff of *The Chicago World* in 1912. That newspaper had been previously *The Chicago Daily Socialist*.²²

In November 1908 Gaylord was elected to the Wisconsin senate in the Sixth District, made up of Milwaukee's 9th, 10th, 20th, and 22nd Wards. He was the elected to the Wisconsin senate, the only Socialist; he was from the same district that had sent the first Socialist to the senate, Jacob Rummel, in 1904.

Highlights of Gaylord's work in the four years he served in the legislature were recounted in four pages in the *Social-Democratic Vest Pocket Manual, 1912 Fall Campaign*. Three other pages were devoted to a biographical sketch and his overall political record. Gaylord was the Socialist candidate for U.S. Congress in the Fourth District. The campaign book wrote up Victor Berger in the same way in his candidacy for re-election to congress in the Fifth District.

"Winfield R. Gaylord," the little book said,

has a record that his Party is willing to set up against any kind of searchlight the enemies of labor may care to throw on it. Back in 1902, before Socialism was understood as well and widely as now, he took up the hard and heavy work of state organizer for the Social-Democratic Party. Those were the days when organizers had to stand up against fierce ridicule and a steady fire of misrepresentation and falsehood.

Gaylord went into all the cities in every part of the state, sometimes landing in a city without a nickel for the next meal, sharing bread and potatoes in the homes of workingmen who were in the fight for better things for the working class. For this he had left a comfortable place as a Congregational minister. At times, when too hard pressed, he left organizational duties for the better paid work of lyceum and chautauqua lecturing.

Demands for him as a campaigner came thick and fast from other parts of the country. And he served the political party of the workers in most of the states of the union and in city campaigns in Chicago, New York, Rochester, Reading, St. Louis and Los Angeles.

In Milwaukee county he was nominated and beaten for the offices of supervisor, alderman, governor, and congressman. He knew he would be defeated. This was part of the game. He hit hard, took his defeats, and went back into the next campaign hitting harder than ever, knowing that in the end the working class cause can not be held back.

He was elected to the state senate in 1908 by a majority of 416 over his only opponent. His term expires this year. As state senator, he has made a record that is now part of the history of the Socialist movement of the United States. One of the most active of the Social-Democrats in the Wisconsin legislature the past four years, his vote is to be found recorded on the side of every good and decent measure and against every bad and flagrant law proposed in the Wisconsin legislature the past four years.

Ready at all times to throw a spear into any fraud or fake brought to the front by corporation lawyers and political tricksters, he has also made a reputation for constructive legislation. In spite of the constitution and the supreme court and the corporation lawyers that stand in the way of lawmakers and say, "You can't do this", Gaylord has been one of those on the firing line showing that some things can be done.

His speech on "How Socialism is Coming, Now," has been printed in pamphlet form and is considered one of the documents of the working class political movement containing the proof of how things are done today, moving straight ahead, smashing down capitalism and rebuilding with the Socialist republic, of the people, by the people and for the people.

A couple of non-Socialist size-ups of Gaylord that were quoted in the *Vest Pocket Manual* were the following:

The Wisconsin State Journal wrote:

It is not often that one man is a majority all alone, but when Senator Gaylord wants anything that is not too radically socialistic he generally gets it from the senate. Gaylord is the most gifted actor of of the house, and the most entertaining debater. Naturally his specialty is factory, tenement and labor propositions, and he fairly eats figures.

The Milwaukee Journal wrote:

Senator Winfield R. Gaylord is a Social-Democrat who, like City Clerk Thompson, has been a preacher. Of course he's a preacher yet, but he preaches politics now. He has been state organizer of his party, newspaperman and chautauqua lecturer and singer. He has a voice that would put you to sleep when it rolls out in southern lullaby songs. Also he has an expressive face. This picture shows his fighting face, but even then there's much of a smile on it--in fact he fights with a smile, and a fund of repartee as sharp as tacks.

Gaylord and Berger were running mates in four consecutive elections against "the two Bills", the coupled nicknames of William Cary and William Stafford, Milwaukee's perennial Republican congressmen. Cary represented the Fourth District for ten years, from 1906 through 1916. Gaylord ran no more after 1916, of course, while Berger's last candidacy was in 1928.

Gaylord was the strongest candidate the Socialists ever nominated in the Fourth District, a tougher one for the Socialists than the Fifth. In his first race for congress in 1910, Gaylord received 11,814 votes, only 447 less than Cary. He came closest to winning in 1914 when his total of 9,149 was 382 less

than Cary's. In the election that year, Berger lost by a margin of 3,946.

Most of the effects of the First World War on the Socialists will be discussed in the next chapter, particularly on the Party in Milwaukee. Partial comment on what has been observed so far is appropriate here. The war was a crisis--the crisis in the life of the Party in America. It was not fatal to the institution, at least not immediately, subject to definition of 'fatal'. Because, in part, institutions have existences of their own, separate from and longer than the people who form them, to acknowledge a truism. But the war, the whole event and all the episodes in it, caused a transformation of the Party. Changes resulted in leadership and membership, in philosophy and ideals, in content and ardor of beliefs, in premises and purposes--changes that were brought about by the impact of human events on human beings, by the whole event of the war on the Socialists.

N O T E S

1. Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Oxford History of the American People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 849 et passim.

2. Bayard Still, *Milwaukee, The History of A City* (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1948), pp. 455-456.

3. *The Milwaukee Journal*, May 12, 1940.

4. William Stafford, who had served four terms in the U.S. Congress before 1910, was elected in 1912, 1914 and 1916 by a fusion of Republicans and Democrats "in opposition to the Socialist candidate", as he was wont to put it. In 1912 he ran on the Democratic ticket; in all the other elections he was Republican.

5. Morison, p. 852.

6. A corollary example of the news of the times in the May 7 issue of *The Milwaukee Leader* was an inside page column under boxed head in German typeface "German Activities". It listed dates and places of meetings and affairs of German organizations. Another example was a report headlined "Editor of Machinists Monthly Dies". The editor of the organ of the International Association of Machinists was an elected officer. The news was that D. Douglas Wilson, the editor for many years and a member of the Socialist Party, had died.

7. Still, p. 457.

8. The grade school was on the site of the present Walker Junior High School.

9. Morris Hillquit, *Loose Leaves from A Busy Life* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934), pp. 165-166.

10. Emil Seidel, unpublished autobiography, Manuscripts Library, The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

11. Daniel Bell, "The Background and Development of Marxian Socialism in

the United States," *Socialism and American Life*, Donald Drew Egbert and Stow Persons, editors (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 311

12. Hillquit, p. 90.

13. In its last year, 1912, *The Chicago Daily Socialist* ran into a bonanza, then bankruptcy. A lockout and strike of the printing trades shut down the "capitalist press" and *The Socialist* profited, changed its name to *The Morning and Evening World*, and circulation shot up to 300,000. Plant and equipment were quickly expanded and high-salaried executives from the struck papers were hired, but when the other papers started up again circulation bottomed, *The World* could not pay its bills, and it folded. The episode is somehow reminiscent of Aesop's observation: Those who grasp at the shadow are likely to lose the substance.

14. Kent and Gretchen Kreuter, *An American Dissenter: The Life of Algie Martin Simons, 1870-1950* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1969), p. 149.

15. Kreuter, p. 143.

16. *The Milwaukee Journal*, March 15, 1917.

17. Werner Sombart, *Socialism and The Social Movement in the 19th Century. With a Chronicle of the Social Movement 1750-1896*. Anson P. Atterbury, transl., Introduction by John B. Clark (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1902). (See addendum, *infra*).

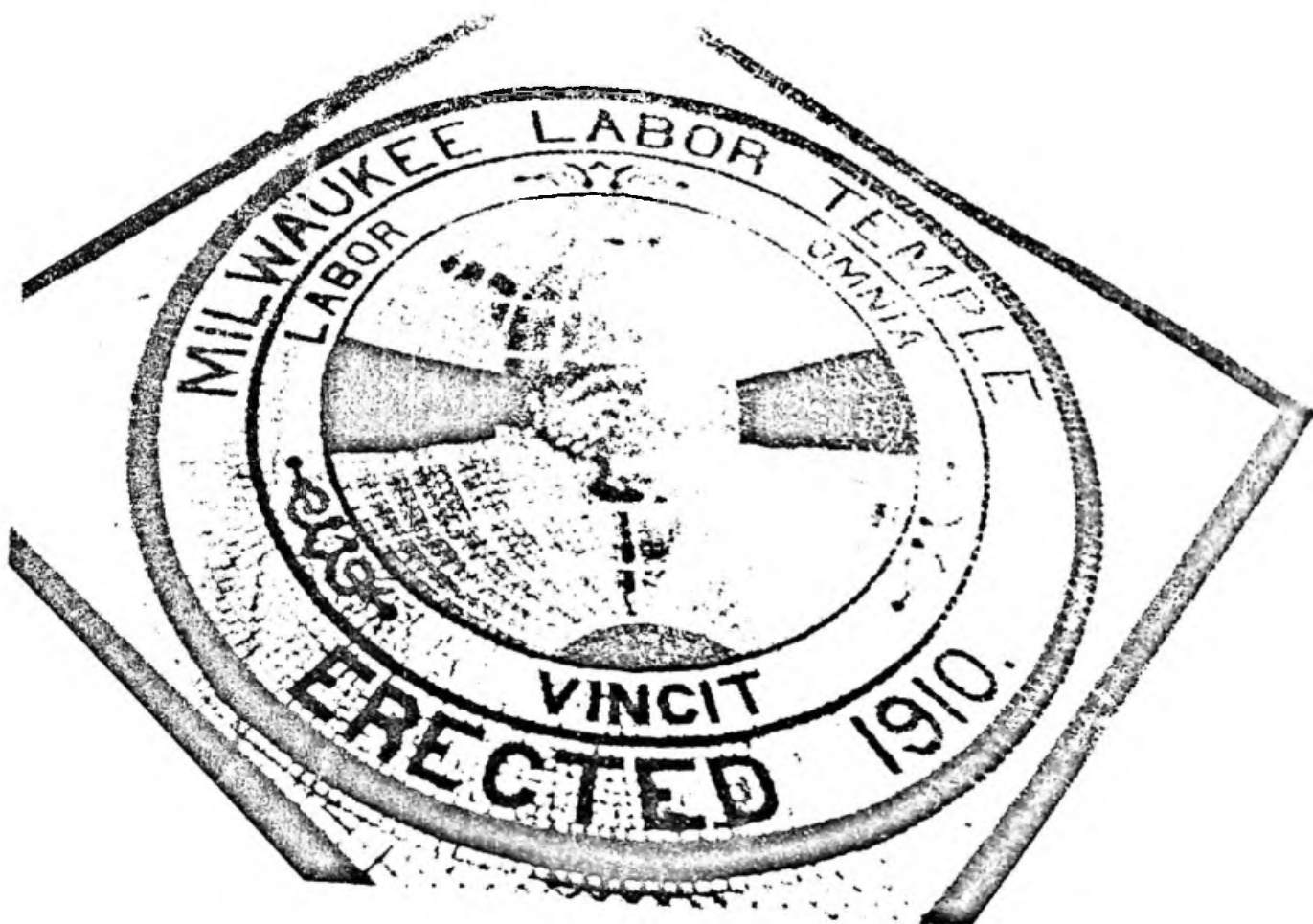
18. Mayor Lunn appointed as his secretary and secretary to the cabinet a 23-year old Harvard College graduate who had organized the first Socialist Club among his fellow students--Walter Lippmann who was years later to be the "sage" of American journalism and advisor to Presidents. Both Lunn and Lippman left the Party a few years later.

19. Unique was the *Municipal Campaign Handbook, 1912*, published by the County Central Committee of the Social-Democratic Party of Milwaukee. It was a paperback of 224 pages, 6 3/4 x 5 inches, with red covers. It was unique in that it was a comprehensive record of the Socialists' accomplishments in the two years that they had governed Milwaukee; there would be no such complete reason again for putting out a campaign book to equal it. Carl D. Thompson, Ferdinand Rehfeld, and Max Grass constituted the committee responsible for the publication. Clearly they had much help from many comrades, but the book is evidence of the editorial competence of Thompson, including among other things a five-page article under his by-line entitled, "The Tax Question Made Plain". The book was a gold mine source for this study.

20. David A. Shannon, *The Socialist Party of America, A History* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), pp. 72, 100.

21. The speech of the Milwaukee comrades reflected the enthusiasms of their heyday in a number of words of their own coinage. After the spring election in 1910, for example, *The Social-Democratic Herald* featured a column of city hall news items under the standing head, "Snap Shots in Seidelburg".

22. Karl Detzer, *Carl Sandburg, A Study in Personality and Background* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941), pp. 74-75.



SOCIALISM

AND THE WAR

**War
Destroys
Life**



**Socialism
Preserves
Life**

COME TO HEAR

EMIL SEIDEL

Former Mayor of Milwaukee

AT

ON

BRING YOUR FAMILIES

CHAPTER XII

MILWAUKEE IN THE WAR

PART ONE

SOCIALIST POLITICS AS USUAL, 1916

The first political meeting I attended was at the Twenty-Seventh Avenue School when I was nine years old. I was there with my father one evening in March 1916. It was a Socialist campaign rally held in the first floor corridor that ran through the building between classrooms. Straight chairs had been placed for the people facing south and they were filled, but I did not see anyone else from our street there.

Oscar Ameringer was the first speaker. He spoke with a German accent. And the people laughed. And he laughed, too. They started to laugh when he began and kept on laughing through all his remarks until he was finished when they stood up and clapped their hands and roared.

In vaudeville, the variety of stage acts during the years before television, foreign accent comedians were standard performers. German "funny guys" teamed up as *Schultz und Schmaltz* were especially popular in Milwaukee. They even used to come on stages in the neighborhood movie houses between film programs.

Ameringer's delivery combined his accent (which one might naturally suspect he accentuated) with a complete set of gestures that included facial expressions, strides, and movements of body, arms, hands and fingers. His comic style harmonized with his serious purpose of getting his listeners to laugh at the capitalist system.

In the vivid scene in my memory of Ameringer that night, the husky man stretches out his left arm and hand and, with thumb, middle and ring fingers closed, extends his index and little fingers. "Here is how the system works," he says. Wiggling his index finger, "Up here are the prices you pay, way over the wages you get," wiggling the little finger. "So you hollar and get a raise," and his little finger moves up. "Then what happens?" His little finger moves upward and keeps the spread the same. So he talks, gesticulates, fingers moving, "If the prices come down" as his index does, "then your wages go down," as his little finger tilts down."

The listeners laugh and tell each other, "He's right. That's the way the system works." It was the first lecture in economics I heard.

Many years later I listened to many economics lectures but remember no single one of them. Probably because by then my brain was so crowded with knowledge.

Ameringer, who was not running for office, wound up his talk when the

the speaker of the evening came in from the south entrance, a tall lean man, very dark, thick black hair, full black mustache, grim face. The people applauded. It was Dan Hoan--Daniel Webster Hoan--Socialist city attorney for six years, now running for mayor.

My memory of Hoan is of a man just the opposite of the easy, jovial Ameringer. Hoan was from the first sight of him serious--angry, it seemed; in what he had to tell, there was nothing to joke or laugh about. In the focus of my remembered view of Hoan, he lifts two sections of water pipe onto a table in front. Rotted, they look to me; electrolyzed is what they were. I remember the lesson.

"These are your water pipes," he tells the people. "They belong to you. They are the property of the taxpayers of the city of Milwaukee. They were ruined by the streetcar company. I bring them here as evidence of what the T.M.E.R. & L. Company is doing to your water mains everywhere they run their streetcars. These pipes caught electrolysis from the streetcars, and it is spreading." Then Hoan describes the flow of current from the overhead wires through the trolleys to the motors and the wheels and how the electricity was supposed to return through the rails. Because the company was not taking care of its tracks properly, there were gaps between sections of rails, and electric current was migrating into the ground, decomposing the city's water mains, Hoan says.

That is the Hoan role of that night, as taped by my mind.

Nothing was said that night about the war in Europe.

The Milwaukee Socialists at that time were fighting the Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company, as indeed they had been for years before and would for years after.

The rally that my father and I went to was an exemplar of Socialist campaigning of those days, special, for one reason, in that public school buildings were opened for the first time for political meetings in accordance with a new rule the school board had passed, introduced by the Socialist members.

The Wisconsin Comrade detailed the master plan for the political campaign in its February 1916 issue.¹ "Milwaukee Socialists Prepare for the Big Fight" was the only headline on the first page.

Hoan had been nominated for mayor in a Party referendum as had Charles B. Whitnall for city treasurer, Leo Krzycki for comptroller, George Mensing for civil judge, and Carl P. Dietz for justice of the peace. Candidates for aldermen-at-large chosen in the referendum were Fred Brockhausen, William Coleman, Winfield R. Gaylord, Edward H. Kiefer, Emil Seidel, and August Strehlow.

Candidates for alderman were elected in each of the 25 wards and for supervisor in each of the 11 districts.

*For a Speedy, General and
Permanent Peace*



Re-elect

GEORGE MOERSCHER

For

Supervisor 4th District, 20th and 22nd
Wards



Candidates Endorsed
by the
Socialist Party



JOHN HASSMANN

For Alderman, 22nd Ward

Authorized and paid for by M. E. Banner 4320 Elm St

CITY TICKET



Comptroller—
George Hampel



City Treasurer—
Walter P. Stroesser



Mayor—
Daniel W. Hoan



U. S. Senator—
Victor L. Berger



City Attorney—
George Mensing



Justice of the Peace—
Paul W. Rehfeld

ALDERMEN AT LARGE



William Aldridge



William Coleman



Fred. Brockhausen



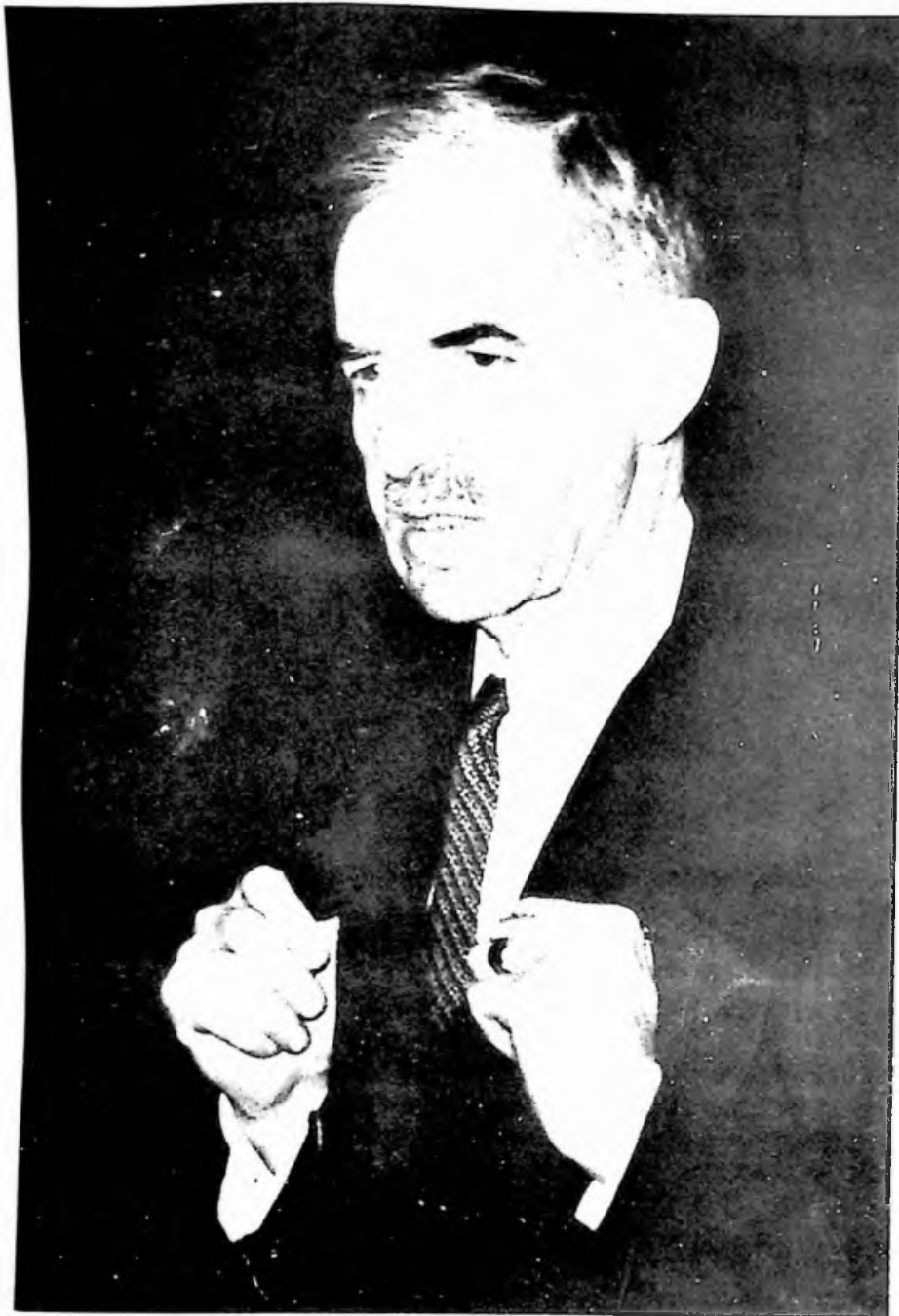
Samuel M. Rubin



Cashmir Kowalski



Edward H. Kiefer



Milwaukee Journal Photo

Daniel W. Hoan, Mayor of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1916-1940. Because of the efficient and honest government in the city under his administration he is considered as being the second of the four "good mayors", the first of the good mayors being Emil Seidel, and the last being Frank P. Zeidler. Undated photograph *circa* 1930. Reproduced by permission of *The Milwaukee Journal*.

The campaign committee in charge was systematized as follows: Victor Berger, chairman, literature and the press; Ameringer, chairman, speakers and hall; Whitnall, chairman, meetings and collections; Max Grass, chairman, literature distribution; and Ferdinand W. Renfeld, corresponding and financial secretary.

The Comrade reported:

Eighteen of the largest halls in the various sections of the city have been engaged...besides these more than a hundred smaller meetings will be held in different wards.

It has been decided that all city and ward candidates shall speak on local issues from a Socialist viewpoint while all other speakers will talk on the principles of Socialism....

The outside Socialist speakers engaged thus far are as follows:

Meyer London, Socialist congressman.

James Maurer, Socialist legislator of Pennsylvania.

Seymour Stedman, Socialist legislator of Illinois.

Adolph Germer, National Committeeman of Illinois.

Cornelius Lehane, Irish Socialist and labor leader, touring America.

Carl D. Thompson of Chicago.

T. Mazurkiewicz, Polish speaker of Chicago.

The campaign will be opened Monday, Feb. 28 in Bahn Frei Hall with Comrade D. W. Hoan, candidate for mayor, as the principal speaker.

Literature Distribution

"The Voice of the People", an eight-page paper published especially for the campaign, will be distributed each Sunday for four Sundays before the election. About 80,000 copies of this paper will be distributed every Sunday by about 750 comrades known as the "Bundle Brigade" who volunteer their services.

This means that the paper will go into every home in the city once each week.² The paper is published in English and German, and English and Polish.

The Jewish comrades will distribute 2,000 copies of a Jewish Socialist paper every Sunday for four Sundays....

Aside from the 24,000 daily circulation of *The Leader* in Milwaukee, 10,000 extra copies of *The Leader* will be delivered daily by the newsboys to a selected list of non-subscribers for 26 days prior to the election.... Some of the classes on this selected list are physicians, preachers, lawyers, bookkeepers, accountants, clerks, firemen, policemen, mail carriers, mail clerks, barber shops, saloons, members of the City club, janitors, druggists, etc.

The "main arrangements" for the campaign described in *The Comrade* also included 300 eight-sheet billboard posters, 6,000 window hangers, and noonday meetings at the gates of every large factory.

"Public ownership of public utilities" was the Socialist battle cry in the 1916 city campaign. In the 1912 election for which the Democrats and Republicans had fused as nonpartisans, the phrase had been used to identify the Socialists on the ballots. It was the Socialist slogan again in 1914. But in 1916 with Dan Hoan leading the charge, the slogan had acquired connotations and force it had not had before.

Emil Seidel had been defeated for re-election as mayor in 1912 and again in 1914, both times by Dr. Gerhard A. Bading.

In the political environment of Milwaukee, Dr. Bading was a natural personality for the mayoralty. Of German lineage, son of a Lutheran minister, born in the city, he was educated in Milwaukee public schools and Northwestern College in Watertown. After graduation from Rush Medical College in Chicago, he became a physician and surgeon. He was Milwaukee's health commissioner from 1906 to 1910. In the latter year he ran against Seidel for the first time as a Republican in the three-party election.

The mayoral election of 1916 was the showdown between the strong men, Bading, running for his third term as mayor, and Hoan, winner of two elections as city attorney, the challenger.

The words "public ownership" were enlivened by Hoan's deeds as city attorney and by a referendum in the election on a bond issue to finance the city's ownership of the street-lighting system.

Hoan's record of unrelenting war on the utility companies included such accomplishments as these: winning from the state railroad commission an action to order the streetcar company to lower fares and to extend the single-fare limits; winning a lawsuit all the way to the state supreme court to compel the streetcar company to pave and sprinkle between the tracks including reimbursement for paving already done by the city; succeeding in actions against the Northwestern and the Milwaukee Road railroads to eliminate many grade crossings.

The referendum culminated a long-standing fight over what to do about the city's wretched street-lighting system. The common council and the electric company had failed to agree on a contract. The

Socialists had gotten an engineering study that recommended city ownership of the lights, poles, wires, and other necessary equipment with the purchase of current from the company. Such an arrangement would be efficient and would cost only a little more than half of the existing system, the report concluded, and was the basis of the referendum question of whether \$750,000 of bonds were to be issued for city ownership of the street lighting.

The Socialists campaigned vigorously for the bonds although they also wanted a municipal generating plant. Mayor Bading equivocated, but his public works commissioners opposed the bond issue. The electric company fought it tooth and nail.

Yes, the company was overt and all-out in the election, openly endorsing candidates on its side and working against the Socialists. The company mailed out 70,000 booklets, intending one for every voter, containing a last-ditch contract offer to light the city streets, claiming that its figures were less per lamp than the city could do. The booklet, too, ridiculed the idea of municipal ownership.

Company employees, at the behest of their bosses, electioneered against the Socialist candidates and the bonds.

"Save Milwaukee from the disgrace of the red flag. Vote for Americanism versus Socialism." These were typical catchwords of the non-partisans.

The election on April 4 was "the most bitter one fought in the history of the city", declared *The Wisconsin Comrade* in its report on the results.

Hoan was elected mayor, but his two running mates for administrative office were defeated. Only Seidel was elected alderman-at-large, running third of the six who won. Eleven Socialists were elected to the common council, gaining two seats in the total of 37.

The municipal lighting bonds were carried by a vote of 29,000 for, 11,000 against.

In that race as in every election, Hoan was a Socialist candidate; he pleaded for votes for the straight ticket and not for himself. This was, of course, a Party principle. In just about every speech in every campaign, Hoan would bark, "Don't vote for me if you don't vote for the whole Socialist ticket! I don't want your vote if you vote for me alone."

Socialist members and supporters would vote the straight ticket, but there were many others who disregarded Hoan's words and voted for him alone and were a factor in his victories in successive elections until his last one in 1936.

In 1916 Hoan beat Bading 33,863 to 32,106, a margin of 1,757. But Whitnall was defeated by John I. Drew for city treasurer, 28,502

to 35,861, and Krzycki lost to Louis Kotecki, 28,152 to 35,791. So Hoan got 5,361 more votes than Whitnall and 5,711 more than Krzycki.

Hoan's winning was called a personal triumph, which it was, and as his victories in subsequent elections would be.

While the Party preached and worked for the cause of Socialism, it played the game of politics, too. For example, in dueling with the non-partisans, choosing Leo Krzycki, a Pole, to oppose Louis Kotecki, who was Polish, was calculated. It was a happenstance that Hoan was of Irish descent and that his wife was a Roman Catholic who went to church regularly. This accounted for some of Hoan's votes from non-Socialists.

To note some of the various elements in Hoan's election detracts nothing from the fact that it was a great victory for the Socialist Party, clearly so in retrospect and recognized so at that time. That so many non-Socialists voted for him was a credit for the Party, too. They knew what they were doing; they knew who they were voting for, a fighting Socialist who, as a poor kid in Waukesha, got his ideas from his father and stuck to them, who worked his way as a cook through the University of Wisconsin, who became a labor lawyer, and who had been contending with capitalist corporations for six years as the Socialist city attorney.

The Wisconsin Comrade of May 1916 said, "The election of Comrade D. W. Hoan has electrified the Socialist movement in the entire country. Letters and telegrams poured in by the hundreds each day from all parts of the country."

But the election of a Socialist mayor in Milwaukee was not exactly a singular event in Wisconsin that year. Socialist victories in other cities in the state were told by *The Comrade*, for example: "The city of West Allis, with a population of about 8,000, located a few miles distant from Milwaukee elected Comrade David Love, mayor and two Socialist aldermen, Comrades Joseph Baloun and Vern Rogers."

In Manitowoc the Socialists "won a complete victory for the people in their fight for the consolidation of the municipal electric light and water plants", *The Comrade* reported, by "the awarding of a contract for the construction of a building to house the combined plants. Socialist Mayor Stolze and Socialist Alderman M. Georgensen led the fight for the consolidation."

In Wausau Comrade Alex Archie was the Socialist candidate for mayor and got over 600 votes, leading a complete ticket; and in Beaver Dam, "Comrade Rae Weaver received 395 votes to 794 for the present Mayor."

Weaver was nominated as a candidate for governor at the Socialist state convention in June.

The developments recounted here were seen by some firsthand observers as history in the making. This is indicated by the following item in the *Comrade* of May 1916:

The State Historical Society of Wisconsin requested the State Secretary to place their society on the mailing list of *The Wisconsin Comrade* and furnish them with back numbers of that paper. They wish to place the paper among their collections on the Socialist movement of Wisconsin. The request was granted.

The day after Dan Hoan was inaugurated mayor, he signed the ordinance that provided the funds for the city-owned street-lighting system.

He was to have a rough time in his first term with more than two-thirds of the city council opposing practically every move he made. But Hoan's holding the office of mayor gave the Party a power base for carrying out its hopes and plans for the future. This was of crucial importance in Hoan's first term when the rumbles of the war in Europe became incessantly louder and then, before he had completed his first year in office, America entered the war.

THE BEGINNING IMPACT OF THE WAR

The fact that the nation was at war, the event, produced in Milwaukee, as it did throughout the land, a tidal wave of acts, of highly charged deeds and services in support of the struggle. The words of the Socialists' St. Louis proclamation calling for continuous and active opposition to the war, unyielding opposition to all conscription and all "reactionary measures" to wage the war, were a dud.

I am my own source for a description of some of Milwaukee's around-the-clock participation in the war that was sloganized when the United States got into it as the war "to make the world safe for democracy...the war to end all wars". These are things I remember from those days when I was a grade school kid.

German had been taught in the public schools. It was like Swedish which I knew from home and was easy for me, and I got *Sehr Gut* on my report cards. Two teachers had classes in the 27th Avenue School; they came on a round of schools in the area. Frau Welch had the lower grades and Herr Loeffler the upper. Herr Loeffler had blond hair combed back, a blond *Schnurrbart*, and blue eyes. He wore gold-rimmed glasses and wing collars. He was a picture *Herr Doktor*, a gentle one. Frau Welch was a short, dark-haired lady, a bit waspish at times. But the teaching of German was stopped soon after we were in the war.

Shortly before that one sunny day when Herr Loeffler was crossing the school-grounds, a bunch of school kids threw stones and hollered "Kraut!" at him. I witnessed the incident. He was not injured by any of the missiles. I wondered about some of the German kids I knew who threw at Herr Loeffler and if they did it partly because they were kind of dumb and mad on account of their poor marks in German.

In the quick spread of the idea that everything German was bad, the word was: no more German names. No more sauerkraut--it was still all right to eat it but from now on it is liberty cabbage. No more hamburgers, from now on liberty sandwiches.

One Sunday afternoon I went to the Greenfield theater, a neighborhood movie house, and saw on the silver screen *To Hell with the Kaiser*. I don't remember anything from the film except that it portrayed the enemy. But I do remember two things. One was that the title started up the circulation of this advice on word usage: "Don't say 'the hell with the Kaiser', that means you don't care what happens to him. Say 'to hell with the Kaiser', because that's where we want him to go." My second thing I remembered is that everyone who attended was handed a leaflet with a picture of "Kaiser Bill". His face, mustache with up-turned ends, spiked helmet, was the bull's-eye of a target, concentric circles around it. Directions on the leaflet were to tack the target on your back-yard fence and shoot "Kaiser Bill". If you didn't have a gun or even a BB rifle, you were expected to throw stones at him.

At that time a cousin of my father's, Oscar Dahlstrom, was staying at our house. A bachelor, he had been a lumberjack in Canada and was visiting us for a few weeks on his way back home to Sweden. He asked me for my leaflet on the German Kaiser; he wanted it, he said, to show the Swedes how crazy the Americans were. (Dahlstrom was not a Socialist; he was a believer in one big union, the objective of the IWW. Another silly thing the Americans did, in Dahlstrom's opinion, was to eat ice cream in the winter.)

Every member of every family did his and her part on the home front in the war. In the evenings the family would roll up newspapers and soak them in hot wax to make trench candles for our boys "over there". The kids would take the candles to school the next day for shipment overseas. (It came out later that the candles were not really so important.)

Meatless, wheatless, heatless days were observed. Sugar and flour were rationed (and hoarded).

In the schoolrooms the kids bought Thrift Stamps, made posters for Liberty Loan Drives, turned in Health Charts recording in daily-dozen fashion how often they brushed their teeth and took care of their bodies for the good of their country--so that, some thought, they could later pass the physicals for military service.

In a junior four-minute speaking contest, the Seven-B class of the 27th Avenue School elected Mildred Wicker and me as winners to attend a city-wide school rally downtown. My speech was on how Liberty Bonds were a good investment. All I remember of this was our free streetcar ride downtown and sitting in a filled hall in the Auditorium.

Another important right thing to do was to plant a war garden--to increase the food supply.

Vegetable gardens had been a part of our life as they were with nearly every family in the neighborhood. Every year my father dug up most of our back yard and planted vegetables. I helped. To increase the food supply.

But there was one patriot on our side of the street who planted a real war garden. With an official sign on a stake in the front

designating it. He hired a horse to help plow up a vacant lot that was all gravel. In furrows padded with horse manure, he planted potatoes. The crop was hardly worth digging up.

But we were all patriots. Service flags with a star signifying that someone in the house had gone to war appeared in the windows of a number of German families in the neighborhood. There was a placard in a window of every house on the street giving notice that Liberty Bonds had been subscribed for.

For my last year of grammar school, in the eighth grade, I attended the Scott Street School (later renamed for its principal, the Anna Doerfler School). Only one class that I knew of in the wartime failed to go 100 percent in the weekly purchases of Thrift Stamps. That was because of just one boy who did not buy, but he was not called any bad names because his parents were French. (His father was a toolmaker, and *The Leader* was delivered at their house.)

Two men were not patriots and were called insulting names by teachers in both of the grade schools I went to--in the classrooms and in the halls when they monitored the kids as they lined up before going out to recess or after classes. The men were Victor Berger and Senator La Follette. They were called traitors.

A discussion in an eight-B civics class at Scott Street is pertinent. It was in the fall of 1918. The teacher, Miss Doyle, was talking about the Socialists and Berger. A pupil spoke up and asked, "But Mayor Hoan is different, isn't he?" Miss Doyle said, "Yes, he is different. He doesn't go along with Berger."

I thought to myself, "She says that because she is Irish. But Hoan is a Socialist, and Socialists go along together."

Well, Miss Doyle was right. And I was right, too. But it should be added that people can have different ideas and still go along together, even some Socialists.

Dan Hoan opposed the Socialists' St. Louis proclamation but issued no words publicly about his stand until nine months after its adoption. However, in hardly no time after the nation's entrance into the war, Hoan acted in support of the total war effort.

Mayor Hoan joined with W. E. McCarty, chairman of the county board of supervisors, in calling a convention which organized the Milwaukee County council of defense on April 30, 1917. Hoan was the first chairman of the council and served as such until April 1918. The council, with headquarters in city hall, continued its wartime service to the end of 1918.

"Civic unity and the burying of political and class interests were vital during the emergency" in order that Milwaukee could do its part in the nation's struggle with the cooperation of all the interests in the community. So stated the defense council in explaining its purpose:

Specifically the Defense Council system was created to aid in accomplishing three things:

- 1) To secure the cooperation of those bodies, departments and agencies, which are concerned in keeping a healthy and efficient population and to stimulate their efforts.
- 2) To cooperate with the Industrial and Commercial Groups to the end that the transition to war conditions be made as easy as possible.
- 3) To aid the government to secure from Milwaukee the maximum quota of men, money and materials necessary to support the war.³

All organized interests in the county were represented in the defense council. Committees were set up by these interests which were manufacturers, commerce, labor, financial institutions, public welfare, public affairs, and women's organizations. The chairmen of the committees constituted the executive committee which also included Hoan as chairman (in the first year), the chairman of the county board of supervisors, the president of the common council, and the executive secretary of the defense council.

The Milwaukee County council of defense was formed at the request of the state council of defense with which it was affiliated. The state council was itself affiliated with the council of national defense.

Wisconsin was the first state to create a state defense council and to perfect the organization of county councils which were organized in every county. Only six days after the United States entered the war, the legislature passed a bill authorizing the formation of the state council, and six days later the council was organized by 11 members appointed by Governor Philipp.⁴

Mayor Hoan's participation in the Milwaukee defense council was more than merely titular. In addition to being chairman, he was a member of the public welfare and the industrial housing committees, and he was chairman of the food board. It was in the latter role that Hoan was particularly active. And it seems somewhat ironic to observe that in the wartime role, Hoan acted with the same "Efficiency coupled with Service to the poor and the working classes of the city" that John R. Commons had ascribed to the Socialists a half-dozen years before. The food board ran the food bureau which was a part of the department of public welfare whose primary function was to protect "the civilian population from the ravages of war".

Four of the 57 pages in the printed booklet of the Milwaukee defense council's report of its activities summarized in cool, succinct words the work of the food bureau. Some of the highlights:

In 1917 food prices rose rapidly, poor folks not engaged in war industries suffered correspondingly. Transportation facilities were limited. We needed large quantities of food at low prices. The department assembled agencies, representing the State Council of Defense, State Fish and Game Commission, Express Companies, City Bureau of Weights and Measures, Chamber of Commerce, Wholesale Grocers, Restaurants and Lunch Rooms and the individual consumers.

The work of the Food Bureau fell into three general lines. First, direct marketing; second, educational work in food saving; and third, cooperation with the United States Food Administration for Milwaukee County.

The marketing was done under the general supervision of the Food Board, composed of seven businessmen and the Mayor. The sales were conducted by the City Sealer of Weights and Measures....

From May, 1917, to June, 1918, the Food Bureau sold 468,746 pounds of rough fish (carp, suckers, perch, etc.) on the city markets, and from September 19, 1918, to November 19, 1918, 127,660 pounds. The total sales were 596,406 pounds. The bulk of these fish were sold at from 6 to 7 cents a pound. Previous to the activities of the Food Bureau in this direction, rough fish were being sold at from 18 to 20 cents a pound.

A year ago fish were obtained through the State Conservation Commission. To date this year they have been purchased directly from fish dealers in Green Bay.

Forty-five carloads of potatoes were sold in the fall of 1917. Some of these were turned over to manufacturers for distribution among their employees; several cars were sold on the city markets; and the balance were delivered to consumers in bag lots.

The price of potatoes in Milwaukee during the winter of 1917-18 was 25 cents a bushel below the price of other cities in the country of Milwaukee's size. This fall the department sold four carloads of potatoes at \$3 per bag of two and one-half bushels, delivered.

Other produce sold included four carloads of apples; two carloads of rutabagas; 12,000 pounds of beans; 1,000 pounds of macaroni; 210 crates of cherries; 200 bushels of onions; a considerable quantity of boxed apples and other miscellaneous sales.⁵

When the food board's wartime sales were over, it initiated a study of marketing conditions and agencies in Milwaukee which resulted in a recommendation to the common council that a municipal department of

marketing be created. With the common council controlled by the non-partisans, nothing came from this. However, Hoan, acting as a private citizen, continued the public sale in city markets of food supplies for nearly three years after the end of the war. He bought army and navy surplus foods and with the help of the city sealer's department sold them at prices that were as low as half of regular store prices, all this without any personal profit to himself.

N O T E S

1. *The Wisconsin Comrade*. Microfilm Collection, The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; Wisconsin. *The Comrade* was a 4-page Socialist Party tabloid. The first issue, March 7, 1914, declared in its front page main headline, "Double the Membership is the Slogan of the Social-Democratic Party for 1914". Bundles of the paper were sent each month from Brisbane Hall to all the branches in the state. The last issue was dated March 31, 1917.
2. The total population of the city of Milwaukee was about 415,000 at the time.
3. The Milwaukee County Council of Defense, *Report on Twenty Months of War-Time Service in Milwaukee, May 1st, 1917 to January 1st, 1919*, p. 3.
4. *The Wisconsin Blue Book, 1919* (Madison: State of Wisconsin), p. 371.
5. The Milwaukee County Council of Defense, pp. 11-12.

CHAPTER XIII

MILWAUKEE IN THE WAR

PART TWO

MILWAUKEE SOCIALISTS IN THE 1918 ELECTION

Actions do not always speak for themselves--not in politics, especially when elections are approaching. Mayor Daniel W. Hoan's deeds, his services, and the counsel he volunteered in support of the government, were not enough. With the city primary coming up on March 19, 1918, Hoan's actions did not always say enough for some Nonpartisans nor for some Socialists. Some on both sides wanted words from him to explain where he stood on the antiwar Socialist St. Louis proclamation. Victor Berger wrote in *The Milwaukee Leader*, December 28, 1917:

Of all times this is the poorest time to hedge, to wobble or try "a seat on the fence" when a question of vital principle is asked--for instance, a question about the St. Louis platform.

Any man who cannot stand on that platform, any man who cannot accept our international position--be that man a mayor or a constable--must get out of the party in justice to himself and the party.

Then Hoan was addressed by a committee led by Fred S. Hunt, a leader in the defense council and head of a brush factory, representing the City Club, and including other leaders of the defense council. The committee requested that Hoan announce his stand on the Socialist antiwar proclamation.

Hoan complied. He sent out a statement to the daily newspapers that appeared in *The Leader*, January 4, 1918, on the front page under a single-column head, "Mayor Gives Out/Statement on His/Convention Stand", with a secondary head, "Says Delay in Answer Caused/by Desire to Discuss Position with Party."

The statement began with an expression of umbrage, "Concerning the extensive publicity of which I have been lately so generously blessed, I desire to make this statement and to express the hope that the press will print all of it or none."

The rest of Hoan's announcement, all of it, as it ran in *The Leader*, follows:

With reference to the question put to me as to how I stand on the St. Louis convention majority report, I declined to answer the question up to now in the hope that I might first discuss my position with the platform committee

of my party in case it selected me as a candidate for reelection (sic).

LONGS FOR PEACE

Circumstances, however, have so shaped themselves during my illness as to make it my duty to answer now. I am a Socialist--my whole soul rebels at the thought of war and the horrors of it. I have been present to bid farewell to the boys who have gone to war. I have tried to give them a word of cheer, but my heart bled for them and it has required all my efforts to keep the tears from my eyes on these occasions.

My longing has been for peace, not war. I hope, long and stand for immediate negotiations looking for a just and general peace. If it is some great offense to feel like this I plead guilty. Make the most of it.

FOR MINORITY REPORT

Notwithstanding the fact that I opposed this country's going to war and never have approved it, I voted against the St. Louis majority report and for the minority report. I found when it was adopted, that as mayor, that there was not only no way of complying, but that it was impossible to obey some of its requirements and demands.

I reported my conclusion to the Milwaukee county central committee, which agreed with me. I stated to them that there were two possible courses to pursue, namely, either to resign as mayor or to comply with the laws of the United States, its constitution and the government's request in connection with carrying on the war. I offered to comply with whichever of these two courses it might choose. It immediately agreed with me that I could not obey these requirements and demands of the St. Louis report and unanimously voted that I execute and carry out the laws of the United States, the constitution and every order and request of the government in connection with carrying on the war.

OFFERED TO RESIGN

I was elected mayor as the candidate of the Socialist party; as such I have repeated my offer to it to resign in case that the proper governing body desires to change its stand.

It may not be out of place for me to state that the Socialist party is not an organization of one man, but that every party member has a voice and vote in its deliberations. Neither can this party nor its public officials be privately



Eugene Debs addressing an audience in Milwaukee. Persons seated left to right are John M. Work, William Coleman, Meta Berger, Heinrich Bartel, and Victor Berger and standing is Walter Polakowski. Undated photograph from the collection of Frank P. Zeidler.

Former Mayor of Milwaukee,
Emil Seidel, speaking in opposition
to the United States entry into
World War I. Undated photograph
circa 1917, reproduced by permission
of *The Milwaukee Journal*.



"Milwaukee Journal Photo"

not to speak of publicly, bossed by individuals, however high the claim to the contrary. I have full faith that the party membership or the governing body will not change its decision and stand.

(Signed)

DANIEL W. HOAN

The next day, Victor Berger declared in *The Leader* in a story that started on the front page under the one-column top headline, "Hoan Takes Same/General Stand As/Party Platform" with the name "--Victor L. Berger" directly under. Two subheads read, "Editor Says Socialist Position,/Expressed in Convention,/Same for 60 Years" and "No Law Violations Asked".

All direct quotation, the story was an interview of Berger on Hoan's statement. Berger justified the Party's position as not new: "The platform adopted at the convention in St. Louis expresses nothing but the view held for the last 60 years by the Socialist parties in all countries of the civilized world. It is the international position."

Berger said that when Hoan said "he opposed this country going to war" he had adopted "virtually the position of the Socialist Party as expressed in the platform adopted in St. Louis". But in the rest of his comments, he criticized Hoan:

The rest of Mr. Hoan's statement is all camouflage, evidently uttered for the benefit of The Milwaukee Journal and of the Loyalty legion.

No Socialist has ever asked Mr. Hoan to violate any law of the United States, or of the state of Wisconsin, or any ordinance of the city of Milwaukee.

The Socialist platform adopted in St. Louis does not ask for anything of that sort. Mayor Hoan evidently has not read that platform carefully himself and got his information through the effusion of Gaylord, Simons and The Milwaukee Journal....

The deplorable factor in the entire matter is that Mr. Hoan's statement gave The Milwaukee Journal a chance to have headlines across its entire page to the effect that "Mayor Hoan and the Milwaukee county Socialist central committee agree that the St. Louis platform is contrary to the constitution and laws of the United States." As far as the central committee is concerned, that statement is a bare faced (sic) and contemptible lie....

The sensational headlines could have been avoided, however, if Mr. Hoan had made a short, simple and Socialistic statement of his real position.

On the same day that Berger's criticism of Hoan appeared in *The Leader*, Wheeler P. Bloodgood, vice chairman of the Milwaukee County council of defense, released a statement praising Hoan. The Socialist daily ran it at the end of the Berger interview on page 10. The statement was signed by members of the council's administration committee, by W. E. McCarty, chairman of the county board, and by Charles Allis who was to succeed Hoan as chairman of the defense council. They were all politically opposed to Hoan, but they said that he had "carried out both in letter and in spirit the government's requests in connection with carrying on the war", that they had had "splendid cooperation and support from Mr. Hoan", and that "in all questions touching the interests of the city and the county and the welfare of the people, the mayor has advised and acted without reference to party or politics."

Two months later with the primary election only two weeks off, the Party published its city platform. "The Socialist Party Platform/Municipal Election of 1918" was the headline in a two-column box of 12-point bold type that ran 13 inches deep on the front page of *The Milwaukee Leader*. (Regular body newspaper type was and is 8-point.)

The platform began, "The Socialist Party of Milwaukee reaffirms its allegiance to the principles of the International Socialist movement--the brotherhood of man, and opposition to all capitalistic wars."

It continued with reaffirmations that the World War "was the logical outcome of the capitalist system" and that the American people "were plunged into this abyss by the treachery of the ruling class--its demagogic agitators, its bought press, its sensational photoplays, its lying advertisements."

Two-thirds of the platform damned the war, then declared, "We shall obey all laws. But we will fight the efforts of any administration--national or state--to destroy our established liberties. We stand for international brotherhood as well as for national patriotism."

The concluding third, urging "the voters to elect a Socialist common council as well as a Socialist mayor", reaffirmed what the Milwaukee Socialists had advocated since the formation of the Party: public ownership of public utilities, assistance to workers in improving their conditions, efficiency and economy in municipal administration. The platform statement, "We believe in the merit system for public servants", was approval of a principle that was to be a hallmark of Hoan's three decades of service as a public official.

Berger and Hoan had gotten together again. They were both candidates for offices on the same ticket and had worked out a platform on which they both could stand. Berger was the Socialist candidate for United States senator in a special election to fill the unexpired term of Paul O. Husting who had died in office.

The Socialist city ticket, headed by Mayor Hoan for re-election, included George Hampel for comptroller, Walter P. Stroesser for treasurer, George Mensing for attorney, and Ferdinand W. Rehfeld for justice of the peace.

Ten days before the primary, a startling news story broke that immediately unified Socialists and their supporters. The timing of its release was apparently intended to create an opposite effect. The shocking news was that Berger and four other Socialists had been indicted for violations of the Espionage Act. A federal grand jury in Chicago had returned the indictments on February 2, but U. S. District Attorney C. F. Clyne of Chicago did not make them public until March 9, a Saturday. It was not possible then for *The Leader* to carry the news before the following Monday when the primary was only a week away. Berger called Clyne's holding up of the news "politics of a contemptible sort. They want to overawe and frighten timid voters."

The four others indicted were Adolph Germer, national secretary of the Socialist Party; J. Louis Engdahl, editor of *The American Socialist*, official organ of the Party; the Rev. Irwin St. John Tucker, Socialist lecturer and writer who held no official position in the Party; and William F. Kruse, secretary of the Young People's Socialist League. Engdahl had previously been a reporter for *The Leader*.

The five were charged with conspiracy to violate the Espionage Act. The case against Berger was based on five editorials published in *The Leader* in the summer of 1917. None of the other defendants had anything to do with Berger's or other writings in *The Leader*. The charges against the other four dealt with writing and/or distributing antiwar materials, but the offenses cited against each of the five were all separate and unconnected.

A boxed editorial in big bold type on the front page of *The Leader* of March 11 began "The Socialist party of the United States is on trial." That was what the "conspiracy" was all about.¹

Right above the editorial was a story with the headline, "Send Berger to Congress, Hoan's/Plea at Meeting." The second deck read, "Mayor Answers Indictment/Charge by Unqualified/Support of Editor." The lead was "Mayor Hoan Sunday, in the South Side Turn (sic) hall meeting, was quick to respond to the indictment of Victor L. Berger, when he cried, 'The best answer to this is to send Victor L. Berger to congress.'"

Mayor Hoan was re-elected on April 2, receiving 37,485 votes to Percy Braman's 35,396. Twelve Socialists were elected to the common council, three aldermen-at-large and nine by the wards; with Emil Seidel an at-large holdover, they gained a seat--13 of 37. The other Socialist candidates for city offices were defeated.

In the U.S. senate race, Berger won a plurality of the votes in Milwaukee County with 34,490 to 31,975 for Joseph E. Davies, Democrat, and 16,206 for Irvine L. Lenroot, Republican. Lenroot carried the state with 163,983 votes to Davies' 148,923. Berger's total of 110,487 was the highest Socialist vote registered in Wisconsin.

Lenroot, who had served four terms as a congressman, had been a progressive but split with La Follette on the war and defeated La Follette's candidate, James Thompson, in the Republican primary.

The war was the central subject of Hoan's inaugural. "Our nation is involved in the greatest war of all history", he said. "Since our participation in that struggle, the citizens of Milwaukee have worked with an admirable spirit to meet every need of the government and this community growing out of the war. They have done this without regard to their opinion of war or their views as to peace."

Because of the "spirit of tolerance and unity" of the people, "we led all other cities in completing our share of the war work." (For example, Milwaukee was the first large city to complete its registration in accordance with the selective service law.) Hoan discussed in detail the conditions and problems imposed by the war which lay ahead for the city.

Victor Berger was elected to congress again on November 5 as representative of the Fifth District. It was the most important and far-reaching result in an election that was *bizarre* in a number of ways.

With the circumstances that America and the allies were still fighting Germany and that the Australian ballot was basic in the American electoral process, the German vote went to the Socialists *in toto*. Outwardly Milwaukee had ceased to be a German town. In the extirpation of German names mentioned before, the *Germania* building was renamed the Brumder building and the statue *Germania* in the front of it taken down and hidden, the *Germania* Bank became the National Bank of Commerce, the German-American Bank became the American National, and the rich men's *Deutscher Club*, the Wisconsin Club. Several hundred persons Americanized their own names.

The German-American Alliance had disbanded. The support of the Alliance had helped the Republican William H. Stafford defeat Berger in the two previous congressional elections. Without it, Stafford ran third in 1918. Berger, under federal indictment for his opposition to the war, won with 17,920 votes over Joseph P. Carney, Democrat, with 12,450 and Stafford's 10,678. In 1916 Stafford had received 19,585 votes, Berger 15,936, and Lyman H. Browne, Democrat, 7,420.

The Socialists swept Milwaukee in the election of November 1918. They won the seven main offices in the county and elected 11 assemblymen in the 19 districts and two state senators in the races in three districts. Outside of Milwaukee Socialists were elected for the first and only time in Wisconsin history to the state legislature. This was in counties populated by many German immigrants and descendants.

"Otto Lerche is the first Socialist ever elected to the assembly from Calumet county." This is the first sentence in his biographical sketch in the *Wisconsin Blue Book*, 1919. Lerche was a farmer and cement contractor at Potter who had held offices as school clerk, supervisor, town clerk and justice of the peace.

Herman Roethel, a livestock shipper, was elected to the assembly on the Socialist ticket in one of Manitowoc County's two districts, and George Rathsack, Socialist, was defeated by two votes in the other district.

Marathon County elected Socialists in both of its two assembly districts: Charles Zarnke, a German immigrant farmer, and Herman A. Marth, a restaurant proprietor and union organizer in Wausau.

Charles Burhop's biographical sketch in the *Blue Book* states, "He is the first socialist ever elected to the assembly from Sheboygan county." He had served on the county board for four terms and was "engaged in the saloon business". There were two assembly districts in the county.

The senatorial district made up of Calumet and Manitowoc Counties elected Henry Kleist, a Socialist and leader in farmer organizations.

Six days after the election, the World War was ended.

No Socialist legislator was elected again from any district outside of Milwaukee. And in 1920 the number of Socialists elected to the assembly in Milwaukee dropped to six. One state senator was elected, who, together with the holdovers, made a total of four Socialists in the state senate.

Winfred Zabel won his fourth term as district attorney in 1918, but the six other Socialists who won Milwaukee County offices in 1918 were single-termers; only Zabel was re-elected in 1920.

A singular sortie for the German vote was Oscar Ameringer's candidacy for congress in the Second District which comprised Ozaukee, Sheboygan, Washington, Dodge, Jefferson, and Columbia Counties. Ameringer lived in Milwaukee. It was (and is) customary for candidates to live in the district they wished to represent, but the constitutional qualification for members of the house of representatives is residence within the state.

Oscar Ameringer, born in Germany, emigrated to America at the age of fifteen, had lived in Ohio, and had traveled around the United States. Since 1907 he had lived in Oklahoma where he had been active in the Socialist movement, particularly among the farmers. In 1910, at the invitation of the Milwaukee Socialists, he came to stump for Victor Berger in his race for congress in the rural areas where German descendants "had become prosperous farmers and consequently poor prospects for the gospel of Socialism. They had, however, retained the German language." So Ameringer wrote in his autobiography.

"To make inroads on these people, any Socialist proselytizer had, first, to know how to talk to farmers, and second, how to do it in German", Ameringer explained. He did what he knew how to do, and Berger won.

"Of course, I didn't do it all," he admitted, but

the Milwaukee comrades labored under the delusion of having caught a world beater. They persuaded me to accept the position of state organizer, from which I rose to county organizer of Milwaukee County, editor of the *Voice of the People*, editorial writer and columnist of the *Milwaukee Leader*, official organ of the Party, and finally candidate for governor of the great and progressive state of Wisconsin. Oscar, what a candidate you have been in your time!²

(Ameringer was the Party's candidate for governor in 1914.)

The somewhat carpetbagger, Ameringer, ran third in the Second District election, but he won 6,936 votes compared to 1,136 that the Socialist candidate, John Bauernfeind, had received in the 1916 election. The winner was Edward Voigt, the incumbent Republican congressman who lived in the district, in Sheboygan, and who also had been born in Germany. He got 15,289 votes.

A. M. Simons in a letter to William English Walling on January 12, 1919 wrote:

There is no question about Berger's support in the last election coming from non-Socialist pro-German sources. The district in which he was elected (and in which I live) is the most German in the United States. Fully seventy per cent of the population are of German birth or descent....

At the previous election when Berger ran for Senator, his strength was everywhere almost exactly proportionate to the German born population and not in any way proportionate to the labor element or the radical forces....

He was weak in the industrial cities of Racine and Kenosha.... He received 1,200 votes in Sauk County (where I was born and raised and here I know there are not ten Socialists.... This Fall when Seidel ran for Governor Sauk County cast 75 votes for Seidel.)³

Five weeks after his election to congress, the trial of Berger and his Socialist codefendants on the Espionage Act charges began in Chicago. And five weeks later, they were all found guilty.

Now it should be added here that when the house of representatives voted on November 11, 1919 (the first anniversary of Armistice Day) to refuse to seat Berger, only one vote was cast against the denial and that was by Edward Voigt of Sheboygan.

In the issue of *The Leader* of January 9, 1919 that carried the news of the conviction of Berger and his four comrades, the following was boxed in a summary of the trial:

THE MASKS ARE OFF

After denying all through the proceedings that the Socialist Party or its principles were on trial in Chicago, U.S. Atty. Charles F. Clyne, who directed the prosecution, declared:

This verdict is America's voice speaking. It is a verdict of this country's people. It is a death blow to Bolshevism, which these five advocate, and to the 'red flag'. This jury has said that there can be but one flag in this country, the red, white and blue, and that those who are not with this country are against it.

Mayor Hoan then was quoted in that *Leader* on the conviction: "I stand ready to join my comrades to fill the jails to overflowing, if necessary, to efface this blotch from American history."

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE PERSONAL UNION

In the aftermath of the First World War, there began the dissolution of that close cooperation between the Socialist Party and the trades unions, a relationship that Berger called "The Personal Union". Now we shall examine briefly the occurrence of this dissolution.

Like the amen of a prayer, the closing words of the biennial platforms of the Social Democratic Party of Wisconsin had been from the first "to the economically oppressed we call in the words of the immortal Karl Marx:

"'Proletarians of all countries unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains and a world to gain.'"

This peroration ceased when the proletarians of the countries of Europe began fighting each other in the war that had soon spread to all countries.

The recitation of Marx's words by the Wisconsin Socialists was an expression of their acceptance of a principal tenet of socialism before the war, of a movement that was international and based on a faith that the class consciousness of the workers in all countries would in a spirit of brotherhood be the force that would change the world.

Even though it may be difficult for many to understand today, that movement was real. The faith was deep and pervasive. Its ritual expressions were many. The red flag was a symbol of international socialism. It had been carried in the parades and stood at the speakers' platforms at every May Day Socialist celebration. It had decorated the sessions of the International Socialist Bureau in Brussels and the International Socialist Congresses, at a number of which Victor Berger had represented the Party of America. Members of the Party regularly addressed each other at meetings and in writing as Comrade, and often signed their letters, "Yours for the Revolution".

La Marseillaise, the hymn of the French Revolution, was an anthem of the red international. The Americans changed one word, "Ye sons of France" to "Ye sons of freedom, awake to glory!" The German Social Democrats of the 20th Ward branch in Milwaukee regularly opened their meetings "with singing the first verse of the *Arbeiter Marseillaise* and the last verse at the closing", as Emil Seidel told in his memoirs. I remember when I was a small kid hearing my father on Sunday mornings alone in the front room of our house looking at the newspaper and singing *Marseljåsen*, the Swedish version, while my mother in the kitchen was fixing Sunday dinner.⁴

The First World War put an end to the international Socialist movement of which the Wisconsin Socialists considered they were a part. The war changed what the Socialists of all countries believed in. While many stayed with the parties, others left, especially in America where so many leaders quit, thereby transforming the Party. Those who stuck with the Party found new differences of opinion among themselves concerning goals, directions, and tactics for the future. Thus, the crescendo years of the Party in America, especially in Wisconsin, came to an end; the future of the Party would be one of struggle for survival.

The Party's ascent had ended rather abruptly in almost every area in the country except in Wisconsin where the organization was strong and where *The Milwaukee Leader* had provided a momentum that prolonged the Party's downward slope.

We have looked at the differences in positions on the war between Berger and Hoan and how they still kept together. Their attitudes were important because they were the top leaders in Milwaukee, indeed, in Wisconsin. Perhaps more important was the fact that the attitudes of each was shared and supported by so many other Socialists. As the differences between the leaders multiplied among the members, there ended something else that would not be rebuilt: the two-armed labor movement with the political arm and the economic arm that the Socialists here had called "the Milwaukee idea". The war caused the dissolution of this unique relationship that Berger had termed "the personal union".

The process in which the same persons were active in both the trade union and the political party, sharing the same thoughts and aims, had begun before America entered the war. Then by 1915 the State Federation of Labor had already come to rely on lobbying for the enactment of labor legislation instead of working only through the introduction and steering of bills by Socialist legislators. For this they needed the cooperation of non-Socialists in order to get bills passed. The "personal union" was further attenuated by the friendly attitude of the Wilson administration toward organized labor when the nation went to war. "Labor's right to organize was incorporated into the rules of the War Labor Board, and labor was represented on the National Council of Defense, the Emergency Construction Board, the Fuel Administration Board, the Food Administration Board, and the War Industries Board", as Gavett has noted in his history of the Milwaukee labor movement.

Gavett observed, too, that as the war progressed the Milwaukee unions increased their membership from a total of 20,000 before the war to 35,000 in 1920 and "were driven from the antiwar position of the Socialists by the inclusion of the labor movement in the County Council of Defense and the outspoken prowar (*sic*) attitude of the national leadership of the American Federation of Labor."⁵

From the founding of the Socialist Party of Wisconsin and the State Federation of Labor, the exemplars of the "personal union" were Fred Brockhausen and Frank Weber. Both served as Socialist legislators, both as trade union leaders. Both were lifelong Socialists. Both supported the war when the nation was engaged in it and had served in the defense councils.

Brockhausen was a member of the 11-member committee appointed by Governor Philipp that perfected the organization of the Wisconsin state council of defense. He served through the war as the representative of labor on that top committee and also as chairman of the labor committee.

Weber was a member of the Milwaukee County council of defense, serving on its executive committee which had direct supervision of council activities. He represented the Federated Trades Council, one of 11 members from various labor organizations on the executive committee and also served on the labor advisory committee which consisted entirely of union members. The latter committee worked out recommendations on wages and circulated information on employment.

Other well-known Socialists representing labor on the defense council were Edward H. Kiefer, the building trades council, and Frank B. Metcalfe, the label trades counsel. Metcalfe was a state assemblyman during the war years, and Kiefer was a former assemblyman. Kiefer also served as chairman of the rent profiteering committee which heard and adjusted complaints against excessive increases in rent.

William J. Alldridge and William Coleman, union and Party leaders, were other Socialist members of the defense council's executive committee. Each an alderman-at-large was of the group headed by Mayor Hoan that represented government. Alfred J. Melms, a Socialist county supervisor, was in the same group.

Herman O. Kent, a linotype operator on *The Milwaukee Leader* and a Socialist assemblyman in the war, was a member of the defense council's dependency committee, a division of the social service bureau.

The focus here has been on persons who had been active simultaneously in the unions and the Party (and would continue to do so) and whose service on the defense council was not in accord with the St. Louis Proclamation. To this the ancillary observations may be added that the loyalty legion was a member organization in both the state and the county defense councils and that Mrs. May Wood Simons was the chairperson (as the word is nowadays) of the Milwaukee county Americanization committee. This committee's principal

purpose was to help "the large number of those under the selective service law unable to speak English".

Some three years after the war was over, Victor Berger assessed the effects of the World War on the Socialist Party in a comprehensive retrospection of the Party's growth. His assessment was part of an article in which he recommended changes that the Socialists should make in their philosophy and tactics for the future. His findings, from looking backward at things that had happened, are interesting, particularly in contrast to the expectations of the Comrades in the years of growth and in contrast to what he had written when he looked forward from 1911 when he wrote that the working people of all nations had learned "to regard themselves as ONE CLASS, ONE BROTHERHOOD." His observations were published in *The New Day*, the national Socialist weekly, dated August 13, 1921, in an article that took nearly an entire page. It was headed, "The Party and the Future/By Victor L. Berger." The following is from the article:

Speaking of the Socialist Party of America, and of its failure to become the great opposition party against capitalism during the last six years--when seemingly there was such a good chance--we must take into consideration the conditions of this country....

...the continuous immigration which enabled the native or early comer to rise upon the heads and shoulders of the later comers who furnished not only cheap and abundant labor, but also a considerable market for the products.

At the same time this "*Voelker-Wanderung*" (migration of nations) also created a condition in the United States as to multiplicity of races, languages, and religious beliefs as has not been equaled in any other country since the Biblical story of the building of the Tower of Babel.

In some mines and factories there are as many as forty different nationalities represented among the workers--all of which makes the "getting together" very difficult....

...Moreover, the World War revived innumerable prejudices and race hatreds that had slumbered for years. And it created new ones--for instance, the almost general hatred for other nationals, for the German, who suddenly discovered that he was a Hun.

The Jews have also suffered more during the war and since the war than in many hundred years before. And there is now considerable feeling against the Irish, and in many others against the Negro. And the "Pollack" (*sic*), the "Wop" and the "Dago" are not particularly popular--all of which goes to show that the World War was the greatest triumph of darkness and reaction in a thousand years.

It did not help the Socialist Party in this country.⁶

N O T E S

1. There were more than 200 convictions under the Espionage Act of 1917, most being Socialists. The law intended to prevent persons from obstructing military operations, not to prevent criticism of the government. However, in 1918 the congress amended the act to broaden the punishable offenses to include "profane, scurrilous and abusive language" about the government or "saying or doing anything" to obstruct the selling of war bonds or the making of loans by the government. Cf. Morris Hillquit, *Loose Leaves From A Busy Life* (The Macmillan Company, 1934), *passim*.

2. Oscar Ameringer, *If You Don't Weaken, The Autobiography of Oscar Ameringer* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1940), pp. 283-285.

3. Algie Martin Simons, Papers, Social Action Collection. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

4. The following are the words in English of the first of the three verses and the chorus of the Red Anthem:

Ye sons of freedom, awake to glory!
 Hark! Hark! What myriads bid you rise!
 Your children, wives, and grandsires hoary,
 Behold their tears and hear their cries!
 Behold their tears and hear their cries!
 Shall hateful tyrants, mischief breeding,
 With hireling hosts, a ruffian band
 Affright and desolate the land,
 While peace and liberty lie bleeding?

CHORUS

To arms, to arms, ye brave!
 Th' avenging sword unsheathed!
 March on! March on! All hearts resolved on victory or death.

5. Thomas W. Gavett, *Development of the Labor Movement in Milwaukee* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), pp. 126, 128.

6. "The New Day Appears" was the banner headline on the first issue on June 12, 1920 of *The New Day*, the successor of *The Eye Opener*. "It will be published exclusively for the propaganda of Socialism." It was published by the Socialist Party of the United States, 220 South Ashland, Chicago. The editor was William M. Feigenbaum, the business manager, Otto F. Branstetter. Writers were John Work, Kate Richards O'Hare, Seymour Stedman, Morris Hillquit, Irwin St. John Tucker, and Euvene V. Debs. Starting with the issue of January 22, 1921, its publication address was 528 Chestnut Street (Brisbane Hall), Milwaukee. Edmund T. Melms was listed as business manager. On July 22, 1922 the front page carried this "important announcement" to subscribers: "This will be the last issue of *The New Day*. Arrangements have been made with *The Milwaukee Leader* to take over the unexpired subscriptions on a most liberal plan."

